The Beat Within

Volume 9.32 A Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside

Art by Michael Orozco

editor's note

Gangs — oh-oh, to speak and write the word in this publication/program at times seems almost like a taboo, a swear word, a word that is asking for trouble from the powers that be. But, what the hell; it's a word that is addressed, like it or not, in every single workshop we conduct. You can't escape the word "gang." It's the reality of too many of our writers and readers of The Beat.

Entering any juvenile hall you will see it in many of the young people's demeanor. You see it tattooed on their bodies or the way they wear their hair; you hear it in their speech; you see it tagged on the wall, carved in the desk, or on their cell door; and you'll read about it when they write.

Gangs are not just exploited by the alleged gang member; they're also addressed by those who work in the system. The system addresses the gang issue by segregating the young gang members and labeling them in the unit, in their paperwork and files, in the courtroom where they await their fate. Some facilities even bring in the gang prevention programs, too. What do you think goes on in a gang prevention program? I wish we knew. Does it truly help assist gang members who want to leave the set, the 'hood, the block? Boy, there has to be plenty of peer pressure already, and to put a group of alleged gang members together to talk gang prevention?! Hmmm.

Hey, we agree that young people who find a loyalty to the gang/thug life truly need, as our old friend Jack Jacqua says, "a check up from the neck up," given we've seen too many find their resting place in prison or in a graveyard.

Yet the bottom line is, what choice are you going to make, gang member reading this editorial note? How are you gonna get out of the life altogether? Can you? Do you want to? Can you live on the fence, part time gangster, part time square? What will it take to change? Can you really leave your roots/community? From where we sit it seems like it should be an easy decision to make, but from what we've seen, who we know, who we are, and what we've read over the years, we know it's hard — very hard. We don't see too many young gangsters truly taking a stand to change their lives in juvenile hall. They can but they can't. Lets face it — the environment in juvenile hall is not set up to do that, for a young man who wants out of the life. It takes a very strong person to say I've had enough on paper or in testimony in front of rivals and homies. If that person is truly ready to leave the gang life all together, he or she probably doesn't want to bring attention to themselves and will wait until they return home, and from there move far way and / or change their habits and old ways. Frankly, given the circumstances in the hall, maybe it's most remarkable that any young gang members make the decision to leave the gang while in there at all.

Anyhow, speaking on what we do know, plenty of young people live by the code of the streets, be it a neighborhood or a color. Their stories are valid, and their stories need to be heard. Some of the neighborhoods these young men and women come from have been plagued with gangs for many, many years. Sure, it's easy to delete a neighborhood name or gang name in The Beat, but sometimes we do stumble across pieces that truly spell out what this gang life is all about. We believe it is essential to the tale, to the sketch to not edit by taking certain words or sentences out. They teach all of us about the gang life — instead of ignoring it by daring not to speak it's name, they give us the best understanding we have of what gangs and the gang life are all about.

With that said, of course we at The Beat Within have to be very careful what we include and what we omit in the many pieces we consider for publication. Of course we have to protect our tiny program from being cancelled or shut down, or even incriminate any writer or artist who wants to flaunt his or her neighborhood. And for most of you know that we won't even get close to allowing pieces that just shout out to the gang, block, set, or 'hood, or allow you to hate on rivals and call people out. Yet, we include what we believe will help raise awareness, educate our readers, to show the seriousness of the matter. We are not simply leaving certain pieces as they are to help promote negativity or stir shhh up, but we do know oh too well how quick our critics are to judge what it is we create and what it is our writers say — especially given that any writers for The Beat can't be honest or speak from the heart, right!? You all have to be manipulators, cons, bullshhh-ers, all about gang recruitment, right?! Right...

Enough. If you flip through any Beat you will see, for the most part, many of our writers — be it a juvenile hall writer or an adult writer — are truly seeking a better life than the life that traps them within, or led to where they sit today. We also know there are many of you, who we know still have this death wish and strive for the gang life, and it doesn't matter if you live to see tomorrow or are sentenced to a level four prison. (Having said that, we urge those of you who are that way to check out the many, many pieces we receive from the level four and SHU prisoners, many who lived for the gang, who write so that you don't follow their footsteps.) Most of you are seeking a way out, even those of you already doing hard time within the CYA and adult system. We just got off the phone today with an old friend who has been down in the CDC for 16 years, and is serving a 60-years-to-life sentence, yet he is determined to lead a better life than the life he lead that gave him life.

We say all this not to take one side or the other — that's not our job. Our job is to give you a voice, teach, share, and learn from all of you, and we think we've done a great job at that, too. We also recognize that the street gang that one might come from has a history, even if it's a history the system does not support. We learn, too often, from our young writers that the neighborhood gang they may come from has been a part of their bloodline for generations, from their fathers, mothers, uncles and aunts, to their grandparents. They hear stories from their elders, like we all have in our lifetime. The young gang member witnesses the good times as well as the bad. They carry the stories and the memories within forever. Many, unfortunately, then find themselves incarcerated due to their poor choices, one's upbringing and community, that history, and here we come — The Beat Within, asking very sensitive and real questions (aka topics) in our weekly workshops. So what else can a young writer write about? They write what they know, and what they know is gang life, the block, alcohol and drugs, violence and the homies. And what we've learned over the years is that once a young writer is able to get the gang life stuff on paper, after awhile, he or she sees that they have to take their writing further, so it eventually has to go beyond the block, the 'hood, the gang — and that it does. So from bragging about where they are from, they soon find themselves teaching and helping save lives from further destruction.

So here's our suggestion: Let's not fear the gang thing. Let's embrace their words; let's listen to our writers. From listening we should gain some valuable information. We, as a society, can set up as many rules and laws as we think we need — that's not going to stop the gang culture. So let's listen to our young people, and from listening we possibly will come up with way better solutions that, oh, let's say... three strikes and trying young people as adults (which not only don't seem to have slowed the gang culture, but actually seem to be working as recruiting tools for the next generation of prison gangs).

In this epic issue of priceless insight, the topics addressed in our weekly workshops were "Why Won't Anyone Listen?" — Have you ever had something to say but no one to listen to you? What was it that you had to say? Did you keep searching until you found someone to listen or did you/do you keep what you had to say buried inside?

How does it make you feel when you have no one who you trust to listen, or when the people you want to listen don't want to pay attention to you? What advice would you give to someone who can't find someone to listen to what he or she has to say?

Our second topic was "Born To Be Wild — Or Good?" — Have you ever wondered how people got the way they are? Well, we have, and what we want to know is if people are born good or bad. What do you think? Are humans inherently good or bad? Do they all start out good and some go bad? Are all babies born bad and become good? Do you think Charles Manson was born evil? Was Mother Teresa good when she was born?

What about you? Were you born good or bad? Do you think people aren't born any kind of way and they just become how they are through experience — their environment, what they're taught? Break it down for us because we honestly don't know.

Are we born bad, good or neither?

Lastly, our final topic was "I look forward to . . ."

With this now known, we think you'll recognize some great on topic writings in this issue, and as always we encourage you to write on the above-mentioned topics if they strike your fancy.

All right Beat readers, check this out, we have a host of writers who stepped up to be apart of our tenth editorial note writing contest. In issue 9.33 we will begin featuring the writings, too. We wanted to know from you what is your all-time favorite movie and why? Do you like love stories, horror, crime and punishment, or musicals? What was it about that movie you loved so much? Was it actually the movie, or the story that led up to or evolved around the movie? Top prize for this contest is a $100 money order, followed by a $50 money order for second, while third and fourth places will earn the writers $25 each. So, with that said, we will feature the first installment of contest pieces in The Beat Without next week!

Once upon a time, to be recognized as The Beat's POW (Piece Of the Week) was a real honor. We would only recognize one or two very lucky individuals, but as has been the tradition of these latest Beats over these past couple of years, we now celebrate a host of POW winners, and that's even better! They are, in no particular order, our 9.32 POW winners. Props to Lil' June, Sho Moe, Vincent, Alexandria, Peaches, and Imay out of the 150 Crew; Young Buzz and Lil' Souljah from Natural Bridge in Virginia; Kaisha representing Maricopa County in Arizona; Beneficial, Hexi, Friskie, Devious, Alfred, and Mm from San Mateo; and finally Joeel, from SF/YGC.

At last, we are winding this note up. We don't know what you think of this, or what you may think our slant is, but what matters most is that we have created an amazing opportunity for many of you readers to share your stories and opinions as teachers, artists and storytellers, and that is what we want to do. Of course we would never jeopardize you or our program, but if you have the commitment to tell your story, we'll do our best to keep it all in it's original form.

This issue goes out to Oakland's Andre Ward for bringing home (from Athens, Greece) the first American Olympic gold medal in boxing since 1996. We do not know too much about Andre Ward except that he's local, he captured his dream, he's 20 years old, he's a father of two and a husband, and that he has mad discipline and maturity to win what he won in such a tough brutal sport. Plus, he's a great role model for many! Speaking of great role models, that's what the Olympics are all about, and obviously it doesn't matter what country any athlete comes from. When you watch these incredible athletes, you have to watch in amazement, given what these athletes must endure to get to such an event to compete. Props to you Andre Ward, and any of you young people determined to be the best in your sport, in your job, and as a student in the classroom. Do it, 'cause your future depends on it.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

Co–founders: Sandy Close and David Inocencio

Senior Editors: David Inocencio and Donna Hunter

Assistant Editors: Michael Kroll, Allan Martinez, Matt Melamed and Arlene Mitri.

Graphics/Layout Editor: Manen Pau

Staff: Pauline Craig, Jason Tréas, Allan Tinker, David Muhammad, Jill Wolfson, Patricia Johnson, Nancy DeMartini, Erica Lewis, Jason Tuufuli, Yvette Mannion, Arnisha McCall, Anthony Huston, Amelia Post, Amanda Ables, Mervyn Wool, Omar Turcious, Dennis Morton, Keir Davidson, Daniela Rible, Roy Hodgson, Will Roy, Eric Strenger, Devin Melvin.

Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Book Donor: Marisela Norte

Beat Supporters: The Beat Within greatfully acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs – Annie E. Casey Foundation, California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, Free Speech TV, Hewlett Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Louis R. Lurie Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Morris Stulsaft Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund For Children & Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Richard Rhoda Goldman Fund, Rockefeller Foundation, S.H. Cowell Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commision, Shinnyo-en Foundation, Stone Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/Renbe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, and the Zellerbach Family Fund.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidence Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Walden House, San Mateo, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden Truth in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at

www.thebeatwithin.org

Editor's Note 2
Pieces of the Week 4
Co-Pieces of the Week 11
Standouts 20
I Look Forward To. . . 50
Wild Or Good? 54
Won't Anyone Listen? 56
Weekly Writings 57
The Beat Without 70

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

From The Beat: What can we say, our favorite cunselor, Aneesha aka Gloria Wadud bka to us as Ms. Wadud, is back to spread the love, this time she shares the love of her life, her husband, Waliyy. What a sad commentary it would be if we didn't have the voice of Aneesha (aka Gloria Wadud). She is the only counselor that truly takes this publication seriously, and realizes how powerful it is to get your thoughts down on paper. She is touching many young people not just in her unit, but in this crazy Beat world. Thanks Aneesha!

Waliyy, My Friend, My Lover, My Life

Just want to give a shout out to my husband, Waliyy.
He is a wonderful man.
He's God fearing,
He makes his Salas everyday.
He's very generous.
He never says no (except to me... sometimes).
Whatever anyone needs he rushes
to do whatever he can to help them.
He's not afraid of hard work.
He is talented in so many ways.
He can fix anything.
He can make three rooms out of one room.
He can take a car engine apart
and put it back together again.
He knows a lot about almost everything.
He's a great father and a better husband.
He goes out of his way to make me happy.
Whatever I want -- it's not long before I get it.
He never disrespects me or curses at me.
He won't tolerate anyone else doing anything to hurt me.
He treats me like the beautiful Black queen that I am.
My parents love him like their own son, because they know that he takes care of me.
I love you Waliyy, twenty-nine years and still going strong.
I pray that we'll always be as happy as we are today.
May God continue to shower his blessings upon you forever, here and in the here after.
Your loving wife...

- Aneesha (aka Gloria Wadud), 150 Crew Counselor

as I walk into my aunt's house, I see my dad there sleeping on the floor

Lil' June's Childhood

Let me tell you all, a little something about me. I really did not have my mom and dad there for me my whole life. And until this day, they are still not here.

I had a rough childhood growing up. No one was there to tell me right from wrong. No one was there to tell me nothing. I had to learn on my own. All I really had was my two (twin) brothers. All three of us were in a children's shelter in San Jose.

We all were in and out of foster homes, and in and out of the children's shelter. So I was always going to all these different schools, and I barely graduated from junior high just because I was moving so much.

Finally, my dad got out of jail and decided to get his life together. He started to visit me at the foster homes and the shelter. Then he even met a lady! — She is my step-mom now, with whom I currently live.

He got a job and all that good stuff. Believe it or not, he finally got custody of me! So I left the foster homes and went to live with my dad and my step-mom. And it was going good for about three years, before my dad started to drink and drink and drink!

Before we knew it, he was out of control. He was still handling business, but he was drinking way too much. There were some nights when he did not come home, maybe because he was too drunk.

Then one day, I woke up in the morning to go to school, and my step-mom told me that he did not come home last night. No one knew where he was at. So, as I was walking to my school, I decided to stop by my aunt's house; and on the way over there, I see my dad's truck and two other trucks being towed away — and all three of them were wrecked!

At that point, so much was going through my mind! I did not know what happened to my dad. So as I walk into my aunt's house, I see my dad there sleeping on the floor.

I woke him up, and he told me that he did a hit and run! He was already on parole, so, what do you think happened? He had to turn himself in. And he left me with my step-mom.

Well, he was in there for a few months, and then he got out. Now he is doing worse, and he has to go back to jail — and I don't know what is going to happen!

So, I'm still with my step-mom — and that is the story of my childhood. Until next time, this youngsta out.

-Lil' June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You tell your story well, and we learn a lot about your childhood. You leave it to us to imagine how you must have felt, first travelling from shelter to foster home to shelter to foster home, etc. — then finally having your dad regain custody of you, only to see him mess up his life all over again behind alcohol! They say that the sins of the father are visited on the son. Now if that means, you get hurt because of your father's actions that are beyond your control; yeah, that's a fact! Or does it mean that you, too, will lose your freedom through drug abuse and faulty actions? 'Cause that does not have to be the case! The pain is unavoidable, but you don't have to bring such additional suffering on yourself by repeating the same mistakes yourself. Keep your head and your mind clear.

The System

The system has had me contained physically since November 20, 2002. And I am both grateful and resentful toward the system.

Being contained in these juvenile cells, has helped me see — peep into my soul and the deepest depths of my mind, depths that have lain dormant and unawakened by self-analysis; and I am grateful that it has given me an opportunity to better understand life and the world I live in. For this I am grateful.

Yet extended containment is causing me to regress as well, away from my innocent good self. I am becoming a new me that's foreign to me. My heart is slowly turning cold, and my fist tightening with anger. Association leads to assimilation — and me associating with detainees that just want to get out to resume their lives of crime, has me starting to think negative.

Being with all these people with the same attitude, is turning me into the me I never wanna see — but he rears his evil head and lets me know he's here to stay! All the things I don't want to do, I end up doing, because the me I never wanna see, becomes me — and I do things I would never do.

It's like there are two of me, and the longer I stay incarcerated, the more the evil side roots down deep — and he is taking over me, day by day. I am becoming what I see next to me, and it disgusts me. I never wanna be like these other detainees. I don't wanna end up in the pen' like the rest of my family — not me!

I fight it every day, but how can I fight a part of me that is me. Sometimes it feels like I am not strong enough. Slowly I become institutionalized and heartless, numb to everything.

But I strive to become myself, the me that cares and loves and who wants to be free! These pressures weigh heavy on my shoulders. There are two sides of me, and I fight to stay me — not my alter-ego, or my other part, which is evil.

-Sho Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know intellectually where the evil part of you will end up, if he is given free reign — in the pen' like family members before you. The paradox is that he cannot be restrained by simply trying not to do what he wants. You can call him evil or you can more accurately call him sick, because it is a mental illness to feel heartless, numb to everything, including your own fate! Rather than good and evil, perhaps a vocabulary of healthy and sick, might help you win this internal civil war. You cannot simply restrain the sick one, you must empower, nourish, exercise, satisfy and grow the healthy you. It is not a war of desire versus restraint, but desire versus desire — your heart must become your friend, not the tool of your enemy. You cannot afford to indulge hate in your heart — or rage — or resentment; if it comes, feel it and let it go; don't nurse it, or you will sicken, weaken and fall prey to the enemy within. You must practice love, forgiveness, truth, honesty, compassion — even as your heart revisits old wounds. Learn to forgive the sinner but not the sin. You don't have to be perfect, just stay honest within; keep your eyes on the prize and you will win.

Being contained in these juvenile cells, has helped me see — peep into my soul and the deepest depths of my mind, depths that have lain dormant and unawakened by self-analysis; and I am grateful that it has given me an opportunity to better understand life and the world I live in. For this I am grateful.

The Beginning....

It all started when I was taken away from my moms when I was a baby. At two years old, I was placed in my first Foster Home. I grew up and spent most of my childhood in an abusive Foster Home. My brother, Willie, and me were always running away and calling the police telling them we were being mistreated. Our foster mom always told the po-po's we were playing with the phone, and when the police would leave, she would lock us up in a room, leaving us in this room for days sometimes. She would not feed us and she would make us use the bathroom on ourselves...

When I was seven years old, I had no good memories of doing anything fun. I would go to my friend's house and tell his mom that I was being beat. She was kind enough to let me spend the night every now and then. When I was nine years old, I watched my foster mom commit suicide...

I ran from my next Foster Home because Social Services split my brother and me up. This is when I started messin' up. At age nine, I was running the streets of San Francisco. I was known on 16th and Mission as "Young One." I was taught by the old gangstas how to do everything from cooking dope to picking locks. They taught me how to do everything but what's right. At age 11, I knew all the laws of the streets....

Being that I had nowhere to go, I was homeless, homeless, meaning I did not have any family except for my street fam to support me. I had to steal and run. I would walk into a grocery store, grab food, and run out. I would go to restaurants and order all the food, and run out. Soon, that grew old and I started smoking weed. When I started smoking cigarettes and weed, I had a new habit to support, so I ended up moving up to the next level...

(To be continued...)

-Vincent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You had a really tough beginning. With your excellent writing skills, you have us wanting to know what happened next. If you had grown up under different circumstances, do you think that you would be in a different situation right now? Vincent, we all know that you are a smart young man and we hope that you will be able to overcome the past and prevail from these horrible experiences. Remember, it isn't the struggle that defines our character, but the way in which we deal without struggle.

No One Listened

why won't anyone listen
i am in the kitchen
trying to burn my arm
cut my wrist open
i am soaking wet in tears
tear by tear they fall
and i am in so much pain
no one cares but god
but they tell me
prayer don't work
layer of my skin is falling off
slowly slowly
i drown in my pain
then i am crying and sighing
no one wants to listen but god
crying and sighing at nothing
wondering why
all these things happen to me
why i can't love
why i can't keep friends
why i can't trust
why i can't be respectful
why i hate some men
that i can't get close to
just why i was abused too
bring all these issues up
and no one listens but god
but i hope now they will
no father / loved by god
and many / others
mom too / family
father / broken / heart

-Alexandria, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your poem is so full of power and pain, it shatters the heavens till they rain down tears of rage. Your poem will stir similar, terrible memories in more than few, who have felt the overwhelming pain of abuse. Yet hurting yourself will not return you to emotional health nor heal the wounds that bleed deep in your soul. But keep giving voice to your pain, and it help you heal as you struggle to feel whole again. Whatever you want to say, we're listening.

When A Man Control Your Mind

Thinking of you
Brings butterflies to my stomach
I love you
I cannot deny
But that does not give you the right
To raise your hand at me
You frightened me
I see you watching me at night while I sleep
You control my every move
My clothes you hate
My skirt too short
Whaap!
I pick myself up off the floor
But I love you
My sister she saves me
But two days goes by
You call me and I'm back to being manipulated
My mind is confused
You promise never to touch me again
But you're back to your ways but more violently
I fear you
My friends they hate me
My mom disowns me
All I have is you
My friends they hate me
All I have is you
I love you
But what your doing is wrong
Dedicated to Chloe' Marie

-Peaches, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Peaches, you have so much more – than him, the abusive boyfriend. Look at yourself. You are a beautiful young woman. Times get rough; we all have times of confusion, feeling alone and depressed. But, you can't let this guy take your self-worth. Then, you will truly have nothing. Think about what you want in your life. What kind of life do you want to live? What kind of people do you want to be around you? Only you can answer these questions. Then you will be able to make decisions that will better your life. Don't surround yourself with all this negativity. We know it's hard to make these changes in our lives – it's scary. But, if you don't, look at the consequences. You can do it! Don't be afraid to ask someone you trust for help.

pieces of the week

I know I am going to heaven, for the simple fact I spent 17 years in hell

Almost Pronounced Dead

Have you ever 'shroomed so hard that your mind literally convinced you that your life was a 3D video game and that you were completely invincible in life? I have.

But before I get in to that, I want to let you in on me for a minute. I'm 17 years old. I was 13 the first time I did drugs and my first drug was acid. At 15 I got into crystal pretty hard for about two years and decided to stick to marijuana and psychedelics. I've been on probation for two years and I'm currently on JIPS.

Anyways, about three weeks ago, I decided to make the decision to move out of my mom's house and move in with my boyfriend (aka violate house arrest). Well, I was at a party the first night out and ate approximately 19 grams of "Magic Mushrooms." I was up for two days trippin' out on this guy's drawings in his room and hadn't even talked to my boyfriend.

Well, all of a sudden (like the first time I exited this guy's room since I had been 'shrooming), I felt everything was meaningless; it was a game. When I walked, I was walking like the girl in Gothika does in the hall, real creepy like with a pop every other step. I was hearing tropical birds in the bathroom, people laughing in the closet. It was like I was in the Amazon and then the room or hallway would transform into a labyrinth with gold painted bushes.

I remember going to my house to get some clothes and my house transformed into like a military game. I heard yelling, guns going off, men screaming. In reality, my "new roommate," Jen, had driven me to my house to get clothes because no one was home and it was the perfect time. But to me, I was running from some drunk foreigners or something.

I grabbed everything and ran out the door with a blanket over my head. Well, things went on and after about four days of being on the run, I crashed my roommate's car and my mom had to pick me up from the police station.

On July 4, 2004, I overdosed on about 150 "around the house" pills to kill myself. My mom came home at 10 pm that night and I was lying on the couch with permanent marker on my stomach that said, "I'm sorry, I love you." My mom drove me to the emergency room while I was violently throwing up. We got to the emergency room and after about 2 1/2 hours, they said I wasn't going to make it. My man was crying and the nurse that had been caring for me started crying. I felt like a small child trapped in a confused body trying to cry, but just looking around deliriously. A few hours later the doctor came in and said the lifesaving words, "Her levels have gone down tremendously; she's going to make it, but I'm recommending that she goes to an inpatient suicide watch program straight from the hospital.

So July 5, 2004 at 11:00 I showed up at Kachina Unit and started learning to love myself. It also helped to build up enough integrity to turn to myself and deal with being incarcerated. One thing I learned from this experience is that true loneliness is when you don't feel like you even have yourself anymore!

-Kaisha, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: Man, sounds like you had a rough year, but that you are bouncing back really quickly. We're glad to see that. You are a very determined person. Keep your head up throughout your struggles, because, as you know, the struggling isn't over yet. Have you been learning why you turned to drugs and strategies for coping with issues without drugs? We imagine you are, and we wish you all the best. You are an excellent writer; keep using your skills to help yourself and to teach others.

My Destiny

The camera's your destiny . . .
that's what they tell me . . .
walk with me through this bad news city . . .

Where you see crack heads . . .
vans full of feds . . .
stickup kids who take off heads . . .

This is really the life I chosen . . .
robberies that leave most frozen . . .
you'll get knocked for the hammer you're holdin . . .

So! Will it be a penitentiary cell . . .
for the coke you wanted to sell . . .
if only that manager would've hired you,
you could've excelled.

I know I am going to heaven, for
the simple fact I spent 17 years in hell . . .

You do yo' time and get back . . .
you still not being hired, young scrap . . .
it might be the simple fact--"You black," sold the crack,
back to basic, grab the mack.

So you back to what you know . . .
hustlin', pushing the blow . . .
lettin' the calico blow . . .

This is the life I live . . .
pushed away from this world, as a younger kid . . .
I figure that's why I am known as Young Buzz

So now that I've shown my hood . . .
if I was able to work, I would . . .

I am locked up on the in/outside . . .
where heads collide . . .

I'll never become an apprentice . . .
so, shorten or extend my sentence . . .
I am a warrior, I handle my business . . .

Frankly, a judge or courtroom doesn't give me a scare . . .
strap me up, hit the switch, I'll die in the chair . . .
it'll be better then fighting the bullshhh war out there

-Young Buzz, Virginia

From The Beat: This is both strong and bleak, friend. Where is the light at the end of this terrible tunnel? Where can you find the support you need to come out into the light for the sake of your own, utterly unique young life? Through prayer? Education? Through people in the system who care about you? Through family members who refuse to give up no matter what? (Why do you say you'll "never become an apprentice"?)

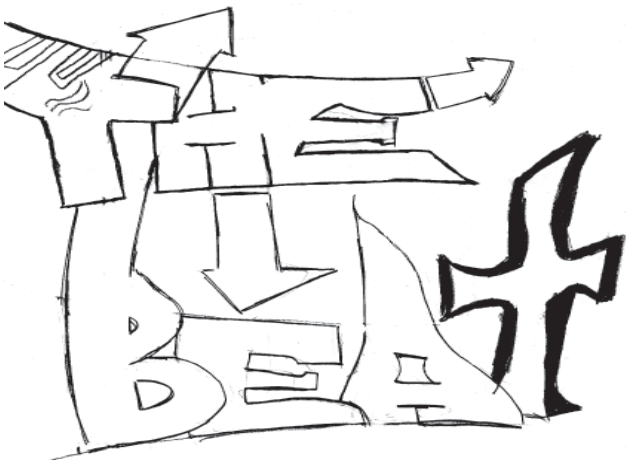
I know I am going to heaven, for the simple fact I spent 17 years in hell

A Patient Man

The first nine years of my life were spent in love,
In the warmth of an old brick house my grandpa built in gentle hands
In a world of sounds, smiles, and smells,
The flavor and fun of early waking to climb under covers with grandma before breakfast
In the middle winter, when chilled air from morning and sun snipped breeze whispered below the heavy oak door filling rooms frigid fresh of thin breaths
I would curl round the smooth legs of mahogany, based above steamed air on the steel of aged heaters
Nine o'clock clean and pages peeled of men in mystery stories, my grandpa would read
With tales of war and stories of lost love, dim lit and calm words of aged lips
I was going to travel on planes at dawn and in dusk oceans car kissed cliffs
I would write my own stories under stars and misted skin of a glowing moon, I loved them so much
Night we'd go for pizza, grandma and I combination, and grandpa along the salad bar with care for family to stretch the will of cholesterol and healing heart
Walks with grandma in summer heat t-shirts and climb the hydrants rust caps
On Fourth of July at bay's edge hearts skip, on the hoods of cars we watched the sky quilt tucked
More than the rest, Grandma loved fireworks but missed all but one, excited in covers to see my expression over the blanket light blast
Christmas, grandpa's smiles to have family together and in his chair by paper crumpled floors and he eats candies
Nine years, mom and I move three block, crystal tear truthful cries and lost the life I love
I would visit, but grandpa and grandma on California crossed trips freedom and fishing,
My mom got a call
We prayed for grandma who had a stroke, her life spent, mine stripped and numb love in time would fill wounds with anger
Never healed grandpa hides tears with struggled smiles, and breaks behind the closed door waiting for death
Very sick his bent back and slow breaths are patient,
Patient because he would never leave without grandma

-Beneficial, San Mateo

From The Beat: Beyond the masterful beauty of your words, we've had our own experiences with watching two people in our family grow old together, and it is both beautiful and sad at the same time. You have to commend your grandparents for sticking it out with each other for the rest of their lives. For we all know how hard relationships can be. Did their example of love instill lessons in you? What were they? Was it inspiring for you to watch them grow old together? Is this something you want in the future? Why or why not?



Tell My Daddy

The one thing I've always wanted to do was tell my dad how I really feel about him. I don't think he ever knew what he did to me. I wrote a poem about him. I don't know how I feel.

"Daddy"
I hate you, daddy,
I really do,
You messed me up for life
I'm not the girl I used to be.
I'm cut up with a knife
I think that I still loved you
Even when you kicked and maimed
But then you took that knife and hammer
I was bruised and bloody
I knew that I had truly died.
My life would never again be sunny
And if you think I'll still love you,
That's what I hate the most
I'm not quite sure you're completely wrong
I might still love you.
Almost!

-Hexi, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: It's hard to have love for someone who has hurt you so much, isn't it? But that only shows us how big your heart is. When someone can forgive somebody else for doing something hella wrong, they have a strength that isn't common in every human. How did you develop such a caring heart towards your father? Does this same caring heart apply to everybody or just him? Have you ever told him how much he's hurt you? Why or why not? We hope you are doing all you can to protect yourself, and talking to someone you trust about what you've been through.

You messed me up for life
I'm not the girl I used to be.
I'm cut up with a knife

Daughter

A child with hopes
Who yearns for love
And doesn't know the battle of coke
Lost in the fight
And the lonely nights
Spend locked in rooms
Eating bubble gum 'cause I was hungry
Thought I'd be full if I just chew
To be next to her mother she cried aloud
But kept her pain inside
Left to fight the battle alone
With the only question, why?
Yearning for my baby only to be whole
But soon it was only me
and the rest of them were gone
Thoughts of you cold in the ground engulfed my little mind
Promises that were broken time after time
Looking for love hoping to find it there
But losing myself blind and not aware
Playing house without a man
I said I'll do nothing like you
But here we go again

-Imay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow! Imay, powerful piece! Why does this cycle continue? How can it be broken? Beautiful, but dark piece. Nice writing.

pieces of the week

My Best Friend

At night road trips
Across the Golden Gate from the Bay
Double dates and debates
With best friends in the day
Justin keeps me in school
And helped me quit drugs
The only guy I can hug
And borrow his truck
Sometimes I wish
I could walk in his shoes
With the grades and the fun
And the talk about crews
But I am who I am
In a cell that seems fake
In this hell, where's my friends
And my barbequed steak?
When cooking at night
Justin's turned out the best
Then he'd point and he'd laugh
At my burnt cooking mess
He was a big brother
We didn't need to be hard
We'd rather meet girls
And sleep in the backyard
We spent whole days
Just cruising the town
The ladies were simple
So easily found

But when I met Rachel
That all started to change
Three of us hanging out
And the silence was strange
Two best friends made a schedule
That I soon found in time
But then Justin was busy
Never picked up his line
Even then I was happy
With the "love of my life"
Although nights I would dream
Of my friend as a child
Then I'd hear about Justin
Time and again
The girls he's slept with
His scholarship win
After three years of group homes
And placement type stuff
Her love became pain
Because distant was tough
She finally gave in
And declared us an end
I lost my freedom, my love
But got back my best friend

Now he has the girlfriend
Who was wild and strange
She was the ex of a gangster
Who has bullets for brains
He told me he loved me
And to stay out of trouble
Then his words became slower
As we laid in his puddle
His eyes then stopped moving
His limbs were sprawled sloppy
I stuck my fingers in holes
To keep life in his body
I blew air in his mouth
That seeped right back out
Then police came and grabbed me
From the back of a crowd
I wouldn't believe it
That my best friend was dead
I talked to his body
Kissed the top of his head
I wish it was me
But no matter the wishing
When I hang out with my friends
There is still something missing
So from now 'till the end
You are my best friend
And I could never forget you
'Till we meet again

-Beneficial, San Mateo

From The Beat: We feel your pain to the fullest because we know friends are already hella hard to come by. And he must've meant a whole lot to you because his absence made you cry. What about him do you miss most? What would he say if he were to read this beautiful note? Have you ever heard the saying 'the good die young'? How do you feel about that saying? Does it apply here? We learned from your piece that this guy was very gifted. Hopefully you two will meet again someday, but as for right now stay out here with us so we can be blessed to read more of your writings. As for Rachel, she will always be your first love, and there is no love like a first love.

He told me he loved me And to stay out of trouble Then his words became slower As we laid in his puddle

Who Is To Really Know

Who is to really know
What I want to do?
No one knows my heart
Not the judge or you
Who is to really know
What happened in my past?
No one really knows why I grew up so fast
Who is to really know
What I feel day by day?
These are days of my life that are slowly being thrown away
Who is to really know
What it feels like to make their father cry
And know that it is because of you
But are not quite sure why?
Who is to really know
That a "homeboy" raped and beat me when I was only twelve years old
And ever since then
I have been extremely bitter and cold?
Who is to really know
The depth of my soul?
And every day I feel more anxiety
To feel true happiness is my lifelong goal
I just can't wait until the day that I am free of all this strife
When will that day come?
Will I ever regain all of my lost life?
While I'm locked up I can't spread my wings
I am not able to grow
But none of this matters 'cause
Who is to really know?
I don't know what to write
I don't know what to feel
I don't know what to do
I wish this wasn't real,
But really who is to know?

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: This is a devastating piece to read; we're only left confronting the reality that there's no way that we can know what it's been like to go through the trials you've faced, or to feel the pain, despair, anxiety that you've felt. What we do know is that the power of this reflection, and even the seemingly unanswerable questions you pose, bode well for your ability to begin to heal. What is it that is in the depth of your soul? Sometimes writing, even when you don't know what to write, is the best way to start sorting through all the feelings and confusion that you have. Only you can know what is in the depth of your soul, but you have the power to bring it out of the depths and into the light.

No More Tears

There are no more tears
That fall from my face
Even though you would expect me
To be full of sorrow in this place
But still there are no more tears
Being in here is making me stronger
For my coming years
I don't know why
There are no more tears
It is because of the grace of God
That I am here today
I pray for those who are lost
And are trying to find their way
But I shed no more tears
I'm now able to understand
I don't have to go through life
Always depending on a man
I believe that is why
There are no more tears
No more childish behavior
I can overcome my fears
I will not allow myself to fail
I will overcome all obstacles
And I will prevail
I am becoming wiser
For my coming years
Which is why I believe
There are no more tears
I may not feel love
I may never be rid of pain
But I have something of greater worth
I have a functioning brain
As long as I have a pencil and paper
I will stay true and maintain
There are just no more tears . . .

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: Your description of your brain as merely "functioning" is an understatement. We're glad to see that your tears have dried up, though they can often be expressions of a heart that still knows how to feel. How will you prevail over the obstacles you face? What are the obstacles that are facing you right now? How do the pencil and paper help you to stay true and maintain? You're a strong writer, Friskie, and we hope you continue to use the pencil and paper to educate and lift yourself and others.

Most people are afraid of opening up to the world, because of loss of listening. Many can not process the information that is received in the brain because they fail to use their hearts

You Listening?

I think that the complexities of listening go far beyond what the mind conceives as information. When the mind does not understand it often draws clues or even searches for answers. So when one feels as if they are not listened to, it is often because they, themselves, have made up their minds about certain types of people. They often do not give the information that they have to give because of past experiences, where they felt as if the listener used what they had to say against them instead of helping them.

Most people are afraid of opening up to the world, because of loss of listening. Many can not process the information that is received in the brain because they fail to use their hearts. So that is why many hide what they have to say deep inside until they feel as if someone will not deprive them of their thoughts. So the next time you ask "Why?" ask "Why must you listen only with your ears, and not with your heart."

-Lil' Souljah, Virginia

From The Beat: What've you've laid out "from the heart" is worth our hearing–and "listening to" (there IS a difference). And you've written it with confidence.

Stronger And Wiser

I have beautiful, blue eyes
I am strong like my mother
I have many problems like my father
I try not to give up so easy
I try to not let being here get to me
I like to see people happy
I am very quiet
I am very lonely
Nobody to talk to
I miss my mother
I want to hug her so I can feel some sort of reassurance
Nothing can replace my mom
I feel she doesn't understand me
I don't even understand myself
We fight all the time
But I'm sick of making her mad
My dad abused us all his life
Drinks too much, smokes too much, shhh . . .
Never been a real father
Never learned responsibility
Don't even consider him a father
Burnt a hole in my heart
Mad at the fact I'll never get a real father
But I gotta come to reality that
Nobody is perfect
He doesn't visit me
He tells me that he doesn't care where or what I do
I can't believe you could do me like that
I can forgive, but never forget
I regret meeting my very first love
Ya did me wrong
You tore me into pieces
I'm still all screwed up
Trying to get myself back together
So much shame
Abused me and my body
I regret losing my virginity to you
I let myself and my mom down
It was all the pride I had left
Made me feel empty inside
But that's alright
What comes around goes round
But when it comes down to it
I don't regret everything that I've been through
Because it made me stronger and wiser.

-Mm, San Mateo

From The Beat: What continually amazes us about some Beat writers is that despite incredibly painful and damaging situations, they manage to convey a sense of hope. It is incredible that despite the fights you have with your mother, the broken relationship you have with your father, and the hurtful experience with your first boyfriend, that you're able to look at all that and talk about being stronger and wiser. What will it take to use that strength and wisdom to create a better life for yourself? Will it be possible to come to an understanding with your mother so that the two of you are able to be there for each other, instead of fighting with each other? Can you confront your dad, challenging him to step up and be a real father or leave you alone? Can you learn from the painful lesson of your first relationship about what you really want from a boyfriend in the future? There's a lot you're going to have to face as you try to get yourself back together, but with the strength and wisdom you've gained from these experiences, you can put the pieces back together.

pieces of the week

Angel and Devil

I got a devil on my left and angel on my right
Wondering which one is right
Got my shoulders tense and tight
They got me doing stuff out of spite
For not knowing wrong from right
I wonder which one cherishes my soul and life
More than the other
I guess I find out when my eyes close like shutters

The devil got me doing the opposite of right
Telling me clench the pistol tight
Pull the trigger and take a rival's life
The devil got jaw sewing me up with game nice and tight
Breaking the law hanging on the corners in the mist of the night
Forget the madness I saw, the devil told me it was right
On my hands and knees I crawl searching for the light
When will I reach it, heard the pastor preach it
Holy grounds, huh! I'm trying to seek it
Piece the pieces, no peace until all enemies decease
Bullets explode rest in peace
Coroners picking up they chest piece by piece
And the devil laughs as plan unfolds piece by piece
I'm at the bottom of the devil's throne hooked to a leash
While my dead enemies poking picks at me
The devil woofed a great deal
Come with me and you will be happy
Now look at me another victim to devil's venoming words
The sweetest thing I ever heard was the devil words.

I got a devil on my left and angel on my right
Wondering which one is right
got my shoulders tense and tight
They got me doing stuff out of spite
For not knowing wrong from right
I wonder which one cherishes my soul and life
More than the other
I guess I find out when my eyes close like shutters

Peep the stats put away the ski mask and gats
Then you won't have to watch your back
Stay away from the exits of hell and stay on the right track
Stop manufacturing crack, stop putting hollow tips in yo' gats
You wonder why it feels like the world's on your back
Maybe because all the sin you committed made you whack
You say you stuck in the game
There is a way back
Open your eyes too many young rogues who lost their lives
It's time for you to visualize a better life
It's time you end your bad ways and live life right
Stop doing things out of spite
The heavenly gates is an amazing site
Trust me on this all right
Because the burning pits of hell ain't a pretty sight
I know the devil is corrupting but stay strong all right

I got a devil on my left and angel on my right
Wondering which one is right,
got my shoulders tense and tight
They got me doing stuff out of spite
For not knowing wrong from right
I wonder which one cherishes my soul and life
More than the other
I guess I find out when my eyes close like shutters

-Devious, San Mateo

From The Beat: We love when Devious writes to us because he makes us realize how much we don't want to hear from Suga Shane. When the angel and devil talk to you, who usually comes out on top? When do you listen to the devil? When do you listen to your angel? We know how much potential you have, so we're hoping that the angel is making more sense to you than the devil. Do you think the devil can disguise himself as an angel and vice versa? How do you deal with this? We can't wait for you to drop another piece, Devious.

Thirty Seconds

What would be your last words if you had 30 seconds to live?
Would it be inspiring as a flock of birds?
Or would you rather like to give?
What would be your last request?
Maybe something of this world?
Would it be extravagant or something less?
All I would want is my girl.
What would you ask a loved one to do for you?
Something simple or nearly impossible?
Would it be the sky that is blue?
Or something that can be probable?
What would you want before taking your last breath?
A soda, some candy, or someone to love?
You only have 30 seconds before your death,
So what would you say to the Man up above?

-Alfred, San Mateo

From The Beat: It's not only that your writing always shows a depth of thinking, Alfred; it's that it also encourages your readers — us — to think more deeply. What you show us is that the answers to these questions are not nearly as important as the questions themselves are. Thank you for being serious, and for taking The Beat seriously.

The Struggle

Imagine livin' in the projects
Always a suspect selling illegal objects
Still make no progress
I guess it's just stress
Bein' alive is success
I've learned f rom the best
to put money over sex
I done been the worst
It's like my life is a curse
Funerals only time we go to church
More pain seein' a face on the shirt
Welfare checks 'cause moms don't work
Down on my luck
End of the month without a buck
Strap in a cage, I'm just stuck
No way out
Been the same since my Moms push me out
More pain than love
Shed blood, family strung out on drugs

-Joeel B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There is a brutal honesty to this fine poem. It makes us sad, but it also makes us understand. Do you really think there is "No way out?" We don't see it that way because we know people (even if only a few) who have found their way out (look at the cover of issue 9.30). All we can tell you is the way life looks to you today may not be the way it looks to you tomorrow, so keep your mind open to the possibilities, and strive for that way that only you can find.

Born To Be a Criminal

I know I was born to be a criminal. Crime has been deeply imbedded in my mind and body. I have been bred to be a criminal.

It's in my bloodline. I am a pedigreed criminal — my mother is a criminal; my father, criminal; my brothers, both criminals. It seems to me that my bloodline is pure.

But me, I used to want to be a criminal; yet now I don't want to be. I am striving to be something better. But my criminally encoded mind, can't break away from my thought process nor the habitual actions of my old self. That's why I'm back in the Juvenile Hall!

I was doing close to perfect, walkin' my straight line. I had my GED, I was president of student council, head of the boy scouts; I had a job with The Beat Within and also at the Oakland Coliseum — but my criminal-born self decided to be the old me and go and try to come up on something I didn't even need!

I was supposed to get out on the thirtieth of this month, but now with this new case — who knows how long till I gain back my status or position at Camp, or till I get released to my grandpa? All I know is I wish my bloodline was that of importance and not that of criminals. I wish I could have been born to be a leader of my people.

Who knows, maybe I can disentangle my web of crime and become the man I strive to become, the man who takes care of his family. Well, we will see if this dream of going against the blood that flows through my veins and becoming something new — will ever come true. Becoming Sho Moe-ine the productive citizen of the community, the respected and well-known Sho Moe — will ever come to be.

-Sho Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Maybe your self-image, the history you carry in your mind and which you believe defines who you are, the criminal in you, the enemy within, saw a weak moment and seized control. The weakness? Only that you deserved to feel better! And why should you have to pay for what you could just take? All your resentment at following rules at Camp, your resentment at not being given what you needed as a child, your resentment at a lifetime of feeling deprived, your resentment at being born to criminal parents who couldn't be there for you and give you what you needed (gifts of love) — justified your action. In recovery from an old life style, we cannot afford to nurse resentments, no matter how justified they seem; for they make us vulnerable to becoming who we no longer wish or need to be!

Hall Life (Part 2)

I'm here at the Hall, and this is my fifth time here. I don't know what to do — because every time I come in here I tell myself that when I get out, I will not come back. But when I get back on my park, it is a whole different story!

Just because I am not from Oakland, it doesn't mean that I'm a square. But to tell you the truth, I would rather be a square and be sharp at all four corners than be a circle rolling with everything!

People in here always run thei' mouth about this and that. The way I see it, people who always talk are the fake ones; while it's the quiet ones you have to worry about.

I really don't like showering next to four other people, or using the bathroom next to three other people!

There are a few things that I have learned by being here five times; and those things are — respect, responsibility, and: if you do the crime, you will definitely do your time! One love to all that are locked up. And this youngsta is out.

-Lil' June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The solution to your "different story at the park" problem is simple — not easy, but simple: Don't go to the park! It might break your heart to give it up. But it will break your heart if you don't, and you're locked up somewhere wishing for one more chance at living free and responsibly.

My mom always said, "A hard head makes a soft ass."

It's in my bloodline. I am a pedigreed criminal — my mother is a criminal; my father, criminal; my brothers, both criminals. It seems to me that my bloodline is pure.

Locked Down Mature Baby

I never been locked up before, but it's not what I thought it would be. I thought I would get scared out of my borrowed panties, everyone yelling and cursing at me, staying in my room all night long and crying my brains out. I'm not scared, but I am in my room all day.

To top it off I'm in here for prostitution. Happy that I didn't get charged with it, I got charged with given a police officer a fake name. The only problem is they wrote down that I'm in here for prostituting. It's not a good feeling because it feels like every time you turn to your left and right people look at you nasty, and it's not a good feeling.

I live in group homes, but I really want to go live with my momma. It's hard now that I look back at it and I think that I should've listened to my momma, but I'm too hard headed. My mom always said, "A hard head makes a soft ass." Maybe that's what I need a good ass whooping. I'm not as bad as I use to be. Now my only two problems is running from group homes and prostituting when I need to.

I never ran from my moms house no more, so what they need to do is let me be on probation at my moms house. I pray to God that they do let me do that because I'm still a baby and I still need love from my momma. I'm 15years old and I might be really mature and act older, but I'm really still a baby.

-Ree-Ree, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It seems to us that you're ashamed of you prostituting your body, and if that's so, then why do you do it? A whooping is not what you need. You just need to know that someone loves you, so you don't feel the need to find that love in the streets. And your mom is the one who loves you. Think about who you are – what you want out of life, and let that guide your decisions.

Our Destiny

were we born to be wild
or were we born to die
were we born to do wrong
and born to do right
some to be successful
and some to be thieves
some to live life
and some to die as teens
not all of the time can we
control our destiny
but we would have a better chance
without weed and ecstasy
some of us aren't blessed
to have moms and pops
so we feel that we always
have to resort to the block
feeling as though the homies
gotta be our family
knowing it's only death or the pen'
like it's not reality
but however you end up
stay strong and solid
good or bad right or wrong
the system wants you demolished

-Cory, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Maybe it's your rejection of weed and ecstasy that established your poem's tough honesty, or maybe its your presentation of homie love as orphaned necessity explaining why a destiny of death or the pen' seems to lack reality by contrast with the daily immediacy of family on the block — that makes your poem feel as powerful in protest as the system it resists!

Love Or Lust

Love is something that no one can buy it's priceless. Love is something you will cherish your whole life. But love can hurt you in different ways that you can't even imagine.

Like for me, I thought I was in love with this guy who I thought was my everything. I lost my virginity to him and he told me that he loved me. At that time I didn't know all he wanted to do was have sex.

One day at school he told me that he didn't want to be with me anymore. I started to cry and I just walked away. The next day I saw my homeboy and he told me that he was telling him how he played me. So after school I went home and took a shower and I had the strength to go to his house. When I got there I knocked on the door and he opened it.

I looked at him and told him that I needed to talk to him so he said, "okay, let's talk." I asked him why the hell is he telling people that he played me. All he said was that's what ninjas do. I started laughing and I told him that he was a punk-ass that only lasts three minutes. He stood quiet and told me he was sorry. All I did was look at him and walk away. He kept on calling my name and I never looked back. When I got home it felt good.

So at the end I figured out that it was not love it was lust.

-Alicia GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Man, we like this piece and we love your directness and strength. Lots of us would have just kept crying or talking smack behind this man's back, or used violence, but you did the bold thing and confronted him with your words and feelings face-to-face. We suppose the comment about his performance was a little mean, but you stood up for yourself and put a stop to that "that's what ninja's do" crap. Have you learned to choose your boyfriends more carefully since then?

after school I went home and took a shower and I had the strength to go to his house.

Talking about "Damn this, damn that," I don't deserve to be here." Well it's karma for your rump. You kicked someone on their left rear, here comes someone to kick your right one.

On My Mind

Well, how's the people reading The Beat holding on? I'm holding on by a thread that is barely visible to the human eye. Holding on to sanity before I'm added to the rest of the insane population in the Youth Authority.

I'm doing quite fine actually. I don't think about my case, the block, friends, girls, movies, games, music and the list goes on.

Eventually, from time to time I do think about those things, but in here it's stress. The thing is for me, I don't miss that because I know I'll have it again.

I'm the one that messed up. There's consequences to everything you do. For example: "Take 5 steps from where you are, and now you are here when you were there." (small example. Hope you get the point.)

Yes, but my heart's not broken, I receive letters, pictures from family, friends and my very gorgeous queen. When I begin to lose myself, I look at the pictures and focus. I say to myself, "Do you really want to miss them even longer over one jack ass?" I know it's not a hard question for me, so ask yourself.

But I won't lie to you, sometimes you get people on the unit that whine all the time. Talking about "Damn this, damn that," I don't deserve to be here." Well it's karma for your rump. You kicked someone on their left rear, here comes someone to kick your right one. Well what I want to say to these whiners is, "Shut your yap!" Find some one who cares because I got my own issues.

Well, to my "friends," what's up to my folks in the other units, Juveniles, and penitentiary? And take care for your people who lay your eyes on this piece.

Oh, don't think I forgot those who love me. I love you mom, dad, grandma.

Them I put over whoever reads this, it's just the truth.

-G-Man B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What an excellent piece. You sure covered a lot of ground. Sounds like you are very focused and know what you can do to make yourself think right— or, at least avoid thinking wrong. And yes, the tread that you are holding is very thin and we recommend that you hang on to that tread for as long as you can. Try to keep it from breaking because once that tread breaks, you are just another victim to the game. If you do go to the Y, you can keep yourself sane just the way you're doing it now.

Not Born Wild

The way I see it, youngsters are born innocent and gradually become good or bad. Parents have a lot to do with how kids grow up. Kids wanna be like their fathers, brothers or anybody they see doing what was "cool." I've wondered how some are so bad, even myself, but all I can say is that we watched, learned, and took over.

What about the people that are worse than their families? In my family I'm not the worst, but it seems they're on me like I am. Friends got a lot to do with it, you know, peer pressure. That alone will get you locked up.

Being born wild can't happen, it just happens gradually from where you live and how your family works. If a lot of your family members get fast money and you see them not trippin' and living large, you gonna do the same thing too.

To me, what I used to do was normal and just recently found out that it was looked at as bad. Maybe being bad runs in the family.

-Ap, San Mateo

From The Beat: Although nobody will ever know the answer to this question, we feel as though your explanation is most believable. "Being bad" runs in families the way that patterns of behavior, good and bad, run in families. As you say so well, children follow what they see. If the people around you determine whether or not you'll be good or bad, then do you regret the people you had around you? Or do you feel blessed to have had them in your corner? What would you say to these people if given the opportunity to talk about this with them?

My Shadow

Let me illuminate my constant probability
I swear in my rhymes so that these otha kats is feelin' me
But half of tha time they don't listen to a tenth of it
I get they attention by spittin' numbers and percentages
I'm sick wit' it bound to make six digits
Preeminent in every eye say I'm exquisite
But ninjas fools tryna analyze my hustle
Tha more beef tha more I eat the more meat in my muscle
Can't let anotha soul rain on my parade
I'm Dre for life — that's stayin' tha hype
Jus' know that I'm not gonna change
But ninjas is punks forget bein' my dog I'm coo' until it all ends
Secluded alone wit' one little light
My shadow stay bein' my friend

-DatOneKid, San Mateo

From The Beat: You are very exquisite, and your rhymes are relentless. You're standing up for yourself, so we know you're not defenseless. But how could people analyze your hustle unless you've given them something to analyze? Wouldn't it be wise to realize people wouldn't be so critical if you didn't give them anything to criticize? We're not saying you're doing anything wrong. But we are saying your business will stay your business unless you tell it to someone else. So keep to yourself and stay strong.

A New Day

I look forward to the day I go home,
being released from purgatory and being all alone.
I look forward to see the smiles of my parents, the ones
who took care of me as an adolescent.
I look forward to being released from this insanity,
to go back to the comfort of my family.
I look forward to breathe that fresh air, and feel the wind
blow through my hair.
I look forward to feeling the glare of the sun on my back
while I'm at the beach having fun.
I look forward to smelling the roses and trees,
planting a new life inside of me.
I look forward to going to church, praising the Lord and
hearing the birds chirp.
I look forward to the many blessings from God, the One who
shows me mercy and leaves me in awe.
I look forward to seeing my beautiful woman,
the one who has that wonderful cookin'
I look forward to spending all my time being hers
and she being mine.
I look forward to that new day, doing my best to stay away.
I look forward to being a new man, learning from my
mistakes and taking that last stand

.-Alfred, San Mateo

From The Beat: And we look forward to how your future will unfold, as you face it with such openness and hope. We know there will be challenges aplenty — there are for us all. But we also know that you are prepared to meet those challenges head-on, deal with them, and put them behind you. We have great confidence in you and your future, Alfred. But far more important than our confidence in you is your own confidence in yourself.

Why? I'll Tell You Why?

Why is my heart always pumping fast?
Why is East Palo Alto and Menlo Park so deadly?
Why must people die every day?
Why do I have to watch out for everybody?
Why do I have to wear a vest?
Why do I have to carry bullets?
Why Blacks and Mexicans fighting?
Why were we murder capital?
Why can't I trust anybody?
Why bail outs so shady?
Why do people walk around looking hard?
Why police at our doors?
Why can't I walk down certain streets?
Why are US Marshals in my city?
Why do they call us "Small Town Cemetery"?
Why are we so roguish?
Why everyone has a ski mask?
Why do I always hear helicopters?
Why is it known as "the killing fields"?
I'll tell you why! Too many drug dealers and not
enough fiends
And it's every man for himself.
Also, because there ain't no money in the community
There ain't no job
What do you expect us to do?

-Wise Man, San Mateo

From The Beat: Wise Man, there's so much we want you to do. We want you to be part of the change that makes EPA safe for adults and kids alike; we want for you to make the murder capital a thing of the long-departed past; we want you to be an example that's counter to the feuds that exist. Instead, you give into the considerable pressures that stack up on your, and the community's, shoulders — packing and wearing a vest, ducking and dodging. How can the situation ever get better? This piece is as real as it gets — what's it going to take for your 'hood to turn the corner and be a positive place to live once again?

Why can't I walk down certain streets?
Why are US Marshals in my city?
Why do they call us "Small Town Cemetery"?

Poetic Prisoner

I've been reading The Beat
And the poems you send
Knocked off my feet
They put heat in my pen
Can't say what got you caught up
But I've been through some funk
Sleeping in a truck in the trunk
When my mom would get shucked
I read 'bout your girl
And when I had mine with me
She bagged ice on my face
'Cause my uncle would hit me
That's why I read
The pieces you write
They comfort my wounds
Like a blanket at night
Feel me, it's hard
When you've lost all your will
So I open The Beat
And read "Time Stands Still"
With Arlene and the love
The flush of desire
I dream of the world
Of the flesh and the fire
I keep all your pieces
And I see you still hurt
You're out of the walls
Still stuck in the world
I read of your mom
All the struggle and pain
But if she knows then she's proud
All the lives that you've changed
I checked out your brother
The influence he faced
If he never saw you
He might take your place
I heard about the wifey
Relationships aren't about smarts
It's love and it's trust
So just give her your heart
And about hittin' blunts
I bet I hit harder
Blowin' ten jays a day
And shhh, I got smarter
So who's your enemy
Punk ass little kid
Well if you're a punk
Than I guess I'm unhitched
Write about yourself not a bum
Just get your shhh straight
Mobbin' pigeons for crums
Write 'bout Will Roy the Great
I know things are tough
So when writing gets hard
Always remember your words
All burn deep in my heart
Thank you for comfort
And making poems exciting
But most of all, 'cause of you
I started my writing
Writing about life
About lust, love, and crooks
Writing so much
That I am writing a book
Write me if you want
To collaborate
We can write about life
In the poems of pain
But before I leave let me say
"My worst enemy's not flowin"
'cause if you were a punk
you wouldn't be getting this poem

-Beneficial, San Mateo

From The Beat: What can we say about the love you extend/To our own troubled poet, our colleague and friend/Your voice Beats it out, like the wings of a bird/That his heart and his soul shine forth in his word/His future and yours may entwine — or may not/But the pain you both know is as tight as a knot/From poet to poet, there's no greater gift/Than to inspire, to touch, to love, to uplift/In the beginning "the Word" — the ripples first thrust/Now from him then to you, then from you now to us.

Aggravation

Sometimes the aggravation takes over
Feelings of loneliness appear
Complete abandonment
Overcome with fear
People pushing buttons
The aggravation takes control
And in here, it's not like when we get mad
We can go outside and take a stroll
Aggravation taking over
Interrupting processing emotions
Everyone is busy
The aggravation destroys people's devotions
Our world is wasting away
This aggravation is destroying families
And it's getting worse every passing day
Aggravated constantly
People wanting to run
I pray God keeps a watching eye
On those under the sun
This aggravation got the best of me
And I pray it doesn't get the rest of me
I'm reaching out to those who feel this
Aggravation

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: We're sure many Beat readers feel this piece — the aggravation you describe is something that everybody can relate to, but especially those who are in the Hall. How do you deal with the loneliness, abandonment, and aggravation that you feel? Is there a way to gain a sense of relief and calm yourself down? How can you keep it from taking over and dictating the way you act and feel? The one thing we don't agree with is when you say that the aggravation got the best of you — we think the best of you still finds a way to shine in your writing.

My Life

My life feels like it's coming to an end. I'm about to be 16 on August 21, but I feel hella old. I miss back in da days when you never got into trouble and they called me a little angel. I also miss kickin' it in South San Francisco and having fun, but now look where I'm at. Not a fun place, but I guess it might just help me.

I got out in June. Then, some bullshhh when down, so I had to kick rocks for a minute. I was with some so-called homegirls who did me dirty. When we went to this party, they left me drunk with nothing but guys. Some stuff happened to me, but I ain't gonna speak on that. I really regret tryin' to have fun!

Well, anways, I guess I was trying to show off or something because the next day I went with my 'cousin to her homeboy's crib to kick it and my stupid self did six lines of coke and six lines of crystal to ease my pain — 'cause you know I was on da' run, and I was stressin'. But don't get me wrong: I ain't no dope fiend and all of it was my first time doing a hardcore drug. I'm a weed-smoker, nothin' else.

Well, after all that being on the run, I came home and I can't believe I let my mom see me like that. Well, she brought me to the crazy hospital so they could make sure everything was okay with me. From the hospital, 5-0 came and swooped me up and took me to the Hall.

Now I'm facin' up to six months and I'm also in the girls' program, so I'm going to do my best to come back from all my home passes and get up out of here ASAP. Well, my mom is six and a half months pregnant and she's having her first boy, so I'm not gonna be able to see his birth, but I'm still gonna love him.

Much love Mom, sister, brother-in-law, niece, and step-dad. Also, to everyone in the Hall, keep yo' head up and stay strong.

-Lil' Cuba, San Mateo

From The Beat: No wonder you feel hella old — you've lived so much in the last few months, let alone the sixteen years you've been alive. We respect that you didn't want to talk on what happened that night when you were left alone with nothing but guys, but it seems that this is something that you need to be able to talk to someone about. Is there anyone in the Hall you feel comfortable speaking with? How will you make sure that you don't put yourself in the same situation, with so-called homegirls, again? You've been through so much — maybe more than even you realize. How can you start picking up the pieces so that you can be a good role model to your newborn little brother?

Life In Juvenile Hall

Juvenile Hall is the place where I stay. I try not to make it my second home, but it's hard when you been here so many times.

I got family in prison. I have family in Juvenile Hall; it's nothing new to me. I have been in and out of there it's like my second home. It's sad, because I said it's like my second home, because I don't belong in Durango. I'm trying to break the chain, but it's a little hard for me.

Why? Because I have people down my throat telling me what do it. I don't like that, so I be doing other things, like breaking the law. I thought it was cool at first, because I saw my big brother do it, so I did it, too. But now that my brother is gone in prison and trying his best to get out, and me in Juvenile Hall for breaking the law. I want to change, too.

I don't like the life I have in Juvenile Hall, especially between these four walls. I never get to see a day. I can't wait to get out, I want to do good and I will break the chain. My mother will be so proud of me, but till this day I will wait and just pray.

-Patricia, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: You say you break the law because you have people down your throat telling you what to do. But isn't it worse in there? Would you rather take orders from someone you love or the police? We haven't come across one person that said they enjoyed being in jail. But hating to be in jail isn't enough. You have to learn to appreciate the freedoms you have. How will you do this when you get out? Do you think you're prepared for the outside?

In My Eyes

What is a failure? There is no such thing as a failure in my eyes. Everybody makes mistakes or repeats mistakes over and over. Do they do it on purpose or do they not care? Do people detain or incarcerate others for the fun of it or because they are control freaks? Do they do it because they care? Are you that important to have people risk their neck?

Everybody's the same or equal, we just think differently. Whether it's murder, GTA or VOP, it doesn't mean you failed, it probably means something was pissing you off at the time and you didn't know how to react. I have never failed myself, and neither has anyone else. Put your mind to anything and you can do anything. People consider me a failure all the time, so I figured I might as well fail, yet another bad decision on my part.

There's only so much you can swallow or tolerate. Eventually you will break and that's all it takes. When your fault-line, breaks which way will the plates go? Will you become a mountain and be on top of the world or will you become another wave that's just going with the flow?

You will miss a hundred percent if tries you never take, so take a chance and try to climb that mountain. If you succeed, which everybody will, you will no longer be known as just a failure, you will be known as a failure who succeeded.

-Menace, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: What an inspiring piece! You've got us wanting to get up out of these hot office chairs so we can go out there and succeed. How do you succeed? What's your definition of success? Do you think you're successful at this very moment? Why or why not? We appreciate your confidence and hope you receive the same beauty you've given to us. Thank you.

Will you become a mountain and be on top of the world or will you become another wave that's just going with the flow?

Why Listen?

Why should I listen to you
or you listen to me
because all we do is lie,
so sooner or later
someone will be hurt,
either you or me
but one of us,
'cause you lie
then I lie.
We lie for no reason
you lied about your age
I lied about my name,
you lied about where you from
I lied about the game,
so why should
either of us listen when all we do is lie?
Why should we listen--
just because . . .
that's why.

-Bizzy, Virginia

From The Beat: You're in the groove here when it comes to the rhythms of the hood, Bizzy. You've given us a lyric about disillusionment and distrust, at least 'til we get to the close. The underlying (no pun intended) question, though, is this: What does habitual lying do to a person's sense of self?

I only associate with my thoughts and imagination

No One Listens

Why won't no one listen
to what this young boy got
deep down inside. A heart full of pride
still shows with or without a smile.
I'm only 16, locked up thinking
who can I trust? People I thought
left me in the dust.
With no one to listen,
I feel like I'm drowning.
I only associate with my thoughts
and imagination.
Why? Because I feel those are
the only two that listen.
Most people are probably in prison
because know one would listen.

K-wan, Virginia

From The Beat: This expression of loss & loss of trust would move almost any reader. You have the right under any circumstances to expect to be heard "deep down inside." What changes in your young life can help rebuild your trust in adults?

Looking Forward

I look forward to
Graduating
Moving out
Getting my own pad.

I look forward to
Starting fresh,
Being free,
Getting away from Dad.

I look forward to
Living life right
To the fullest
And never looking back.

I look forward to
A wife,
Kids,
And being a granddad.

I look forward to
Meeting my birth mom
And dad
And asking where they were at.

I look forward to finding out what life has in store and what it has to offer me. I know it sounds weird, but I'm even game to find out what challenges lie ahead because I know I'll learn from them.

`That's all I've got this week Beat. Till next time.

-Adric, San Mateo

From The Beat: You inspire us, Adric, with your focus on a positive future. We don't think it's weird at all that you're looking forward to the challenges that lie ahead. After all, it's the fact that you've overcome (and are overcoming) the challenges of the past that allows you to be so positive about the future. So, while we wouldn't wish those future challenges on you (you'll have them whether we wish them or not), we do wish we could see the wonderful man they are turning you into.

he always found a way to make me stay

Bringing Someone Back

If I could bring someone back, it would be my father. I would ask him if he really did that to his daughter. Even if he said yes, his son wouldn't believe him, next would be why he drank himself to death.

Watching someone die an alcoholic death is terrible. Their body swells up until they can't move, hooked up to a respirator. Was it worth it? They die so slow it's like their body is eating itself. Can't walk; he could barely talk.

A week before he died, I tried to hug him but it hurt him too bad. Little did I know I'd never see him again. Was it worth it dad? Would you do it again? I hope not. It's the worst and most painful way to die.

RIP TJ, Sr. I love you.

-Tim, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Powerful, painful writing, Tim. After you brought your dad back, what would be the first thing you do with him? Would you go out to eat? Or hit the ocean and swim? We can see you miss your father beyond comprehension. You wrote your feelings down as if you had talent from another dimension. Not to mention, we don't know many people who actually want their father. You keep standing tall. Others may say, why bother?

Thank You Mijo

Thinking back on times he cheated on me,
Did me wrong
And beat me
Looking at you
Wanting something fresh and new
Opposite from the old ways
Happier days
You is where I'm gonna fix my gaze
Those sad memories I'ma try to erase
Start a new life
Only gonna let in people who can
Treat me right
Instead of drowning in that constant fight
To keep my head up and see the light
You helped me to see
That I deserve much better
Than that vato who degraded me
I never told no one
But at times I felt he hated me
But he called that love
And I believed it and took it in
Stayed with him
Forcing a fake grin
When he would do me wrong
I would look the other way
I even tried to pull away
But he always found a way to make me stay
Saying he would change,
But he always stayed the same
Said that he would die for me,
But treated our relationship like a game
I would laugh it off
Taking his jealousy as love
In my mind this fool was sent
By an angel up above
But let me tell you
This jaina became stronger
Not with that vato any longer
Kicked him to the curb
Simon, that fool is a goner
And I would like to thank you mijo
For opening my eyes
For loving me
And lifting me from that world of lies.

-Sad Eyes, Marin

From The Beat: Girl, you've got the juice! Sometimes we all gotta go through messed up relationships before we open our eyes and see the light. Loving yourself comes first. A man who hits you or hurts you in any way isn't even a man. We're glad that you realize that you deserve a good man in your life. Never settle for less and if this one does you dirty...then kick his butt to the curb too!

I know it sounds weird, but I'm even game to find out what challenges lie ahead because I know I'll learn from them.

The Way It All Started (Chapter One)

(This Story Is Fiction!)

What would you do if you like to smoke weed and like to have a Newport here and there, but was broke? Well, this is when I did….

One day, I was walking down the street and I seen one of my friends. He comes up to me and asks me for a cigarette, "Hook it up wit' a Port, youngsta!" He says to me.

"I ain't got one," I told him.

"Well," he says, looking around to make sure no one was listening to him, "I know where we can cop some at and get some weed, too. You down to roll?" He says

"Okay, let's do this yo'!" I answer him.

So, we walk down about four blocks to a closed corner store.

"This is the place we gonna get the smokes," my friend whispers to me, as he peeks around me into the street to see if anyone is watching us.

No one is watching us, so he digs in his pocket and brings out a flat-head screwdriver.

"Use this to unscrew that window," he said as he points to a small window on the side of the store and handing me the flat head.

"Watch my back and tell me if you see 5-0 comin' and don't let nobody walk by and see me doin' this damn mess," I tell him.

Then, I leave him on the corner. I pull a milk crate from an abandoned fruit stand on the side of the store and put it under the window. Standing under it, I begin to take the window off of base. As soon as I get the screws off, I grab the window by the sideboard and pull it out of the wall. Now there is nothing but an opening in the wall.

"Hey!" I call my friend. "You ready? I gots it off!" I yell to him, climbing inside without even looking back to see if he notices, or even heard me calling him.

When I pull myself all the way inside, I drop down onto a shelf. Looking at the contents, I can see I am in the breakfast food aisle. I jump down to the floor. Looking back, my friend is still not in the window.

Now I am hella nervous. Where is he? "Dumb!" I whisper to myself, pushing forward my eyes, adjusting to the darkness. I find my way to the front of the store.

"What the hell are you doin'?" I turn quickly to only see my friend standing behind me.

"Damn man, be quiet" I tell him under my breath.

"Get the smokes and I'll get the weed," he tells me, and walks down an aisle towards the back of the store.

Alone again, I jump over the counter, grab a shopping bag, and start filing it up with cartons of cigarettes. After the bag is full, I turn to sit on the counter. When I do this, my hand bumps the cash register. "Ha, yeah," I think to myself.

I take the flathead and ply the register open. "Fling!" It makes a noise when I open it. Looking at the money in front of me, I suddenly get stuck for a moment.

"This is so wrong. I shouldn't do this," I think to myself. "But I need money to eat and pay for clothes." So, I grab the money: 20's, 10's, 50's, and one $100 dollar bill. I stuff all the money in my pocket until I have no more room. Grabbing another shopping bag, I put the rest of the money in and take out the drawer. To my surprise, under it is at least 50 $100 dollar bills. "Damn!" I gasp and grab them too, stuffing the money into the bag.

"Hey, why are you so loud!" My friend says, walking toward the front door, looking out to see if anyone has noticed us jacking the store.

"Get some drank," he says. "Get some Hennessy and some Remy." He points to the alcohol on the shelf behind me, not noticing the open cash register. I grab three bottles of Henn and four bottles of Remy, and put them in a bag.

"Let's go!" I tell him. "This mess is freaking me out."

Suddenly, a rattle comes from the front door. "Oh crap, let's get out of this place," I tell him, jumping over the counter and running toward the opening in the wall that used to be a window, but when I try to climb the shelf to the window, it tips, making me drop back down to the floor.

"Damn, how in the hell are we gonna get out of here?!" I whisper to my friend.

"The back door, fool," he says back.

Then, we start heading towards the back of the store. We can now hear a person whistling in the front now. We find the back door. I fumble with the lock in the dark as the whistling gets closer.

Finding the lock, I push the door open and run out into a narrow alley with my friend right behind me. Now we are flying down the alley, and when we hit the streets, we both run in different directions. "Where in the hell is he goin'?" I think to myself as I turn another corner onto a side street.

I see a bus pulling up the bus stop. "Hey!" I call and wave for the driver to stop. He does, but not after making me run half a block more. Hopping on the bus, I find a seat close to the front. I notice that I still have the bag of money and cigarettes.

Looking around, I see that I have not brought any real attention to myself, so I look towards the back of the bus and I see this girl that is do damn fine, I have to look twice…

-Vincent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Though this piece is fiction… you've got the juice. Have you thought about going to college and obtaining a degree in English or creative writing? You've got talent, boy! Where did you learn to write like this? Have you been watching a lot of TV or hearing a lot of war stories? Have you had similar experiences to this? What happens with the beautiful girl that you see? Maybe you could make one of those "Choose Your Own Adventure" books and have three different endings. Can't wait to read chapter two!

Not A Failure

Some may think there's no hope,
Think I can't turn from dope,
I don't need that kind of support,
I need my mom beside me in court,
Some may think that I have failed,
Considering this is my fifth time jailed,
I am aware of my horrible mistakes,
I am willing to do whatever it takes,
Some may think I'm just a loser,
I'm an addict and a worthless user,
My PO says, "I don't care! Jail her!"
I only have one thing to protest . . .
I am not a failure!

-Ashley, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: If you're protesting for the last line in your poem, we suggest you protest until you run out of breath. Nobody can tell you how far you need to go, for only you define your success. So until you've reached death, what will you do? What are your goals? Tell us the dreams within you.

For....

For the days
That have monotonous ways
I will always
Be me
My personality stays
And for the people in here
That say I'm a queer
I have no fear
In what you say to me
'Cause through you I see
Your messed up personality
And a scared, little guy
That wishes he could die
'Cause he can't take life's challenges,
So he goes on a "hate" binge
And for the staff
That helps me to get on the right path
Thanks for your help, but
I can get out of my own rut
I know you mean well,
But I don't need help to sell
And my business will not fail
'Cause piercings will never go stale
For anyone who doesn't understand
My lifestyle that will always stand
Just ignore my physical appearance, and
Get to know the person within
'Cause I know you feel me
Through this pen!

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You rock! We love when you stick up for yourself in a mature manner. That's right — you just be you... Plus, in the future you will see all those haters in messed up places. Most people end up getting what they deserve. Those people who judge you for your outer appearance aren't even worth your time. Also, if a counselor is trying to help you — you should accept and appreciate it. That's a part of becoming a man.

Young Tezz's Life

I've lived the life of a thug. I'm from East Oakland, but born in St. Louis, Missouri. I got a baby'momma named — well, that's too much info'.

I have a brother in the pinta (pen'). Then my cousins are up in the pinta, too. My mother has an eternal illness. I lived wit' my grandma for six years of my life. When I was twelve, she passed away. I only seen my dad one time in my life, and that was at my grandmother's funeral — if I ever see him, I'll beat that ninja's ass!

I wish I could see my son. I haven't seen him since he was born. That was in February. I know I'm hurting myself by — chunkin'em, shootin' people, stealin' cars, robbin' houses! Because I've realized that I have a son that needs me, and I know how it feels not having a father figure.

I've been shot in the back, on my shoulder, but bullets don't faze me! I ran from Camp and all that. And now I'm back in this cesspool, Juvenile Hall!

But if my cousin Terrell readin' this — don't run from Camp! Pimp that trash and get it over wit'. That way we can do it big. You like a brother to me, so don't do nothin' stupid. I got love fo' ya, so be cool and keep ya head up! In God We Trust. RIP Jim and Grams.

-Young Tezz, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The biggest thing you could do, is quit the game, foo'! Your son needs you just like you needed a daddy, too! All you got to do to make it big in your son's life, is walk through that door after work every night and give him a hug. Go back to the game of living life like a thug, and you'll be to your son just as your daddy was to you — or quit, go legit, and come through!

Deadbeat

(Dedicated To My Deadbeat Dad)
My time has come
To prove that I'm the one
To my father
And what I'm going to do will bother
Him to the fullest
That between him and I, he's the dullest
'Cause I'll be the one
Havin' all the fun
While he's askin' himself why
Wasn't he there to see me fly
From childhood, to teens, and to adulthood?
And he should
At least he could
Come see my sister before she's of age
'Cause her and I are almost on the same page
Feeling the same about that deadbeat
'Cause I don't think he can take the heat
After she turns
Then, he'll have to earn
The role of "father" from her, too
'Cause the next words that come out her mouth
May be "I HATE YOU!"

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have every right to be angry with your father not being a part of your life. But if you continue to hold anger against him, it will only hold you down — kinda like having a mental block. What has the lack of a father taught you about being a good father in the future?

Blind

I realized that my whole life I've been looking for something I had the whole time, and that's a father and mother!

Ever since I was young, I would always cry for my dad at night, not knowing who he was but hoping he would come save me and make me feel better. I never noticed that I had a father all along.

I would cry till my grandpa came home and came to talk to me. As soon as he came into the room, I automatically felt safe and better. I always felt that connection. But then I would always think, "That's my grandpa. It's different."

But now I know that my father has been by my side my whole life, in disguise as a grandpa! And I was blind to his fatherly love, because I thought I had to get a father's love from my dad who conceived me.

Now I realize that my father has been and always will be: Daniel Gutierrez.

-Sho Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What you don't say here, but we can guess based on earlier pieces about how much you love your grandmother who passed on, is that you now realize she was always the mother you needed — even though your birth-mother would pop in and out of your life. And, yes, your grandfather, who has loved you always, and who was so proud of you recently when you graduated high school plus gave your class valedictorian speech — yes, you've always had a father, too, disguised as a grandfather! It is a blessing that you finally realize it. Perhaps, just as when you were a boy, you will now feel safe and better.

**Wasn't he there
to see me fly
From childhood, to teens,
and to adulthood?**

Leave Me the Hell Alone

I am tired of being in this institution
Leave me the hell alone!

I don't stress like you do
Leave me the hell alone!

I am not a criminal
Leave me the hell alone!

I am so damn lonely
Leave me the hell alone!

I am so troubled by my nightmares
Leave me the hell alone!

I am desperate for my dreams to come true
Leave me the hell alone!

I am between heaven and hell
Leave me the hell alone!

I am near death so step away
Leave me the hell alone!

I am living only for my family
Leave me the hell alone!

I am praying for the best and
Hoping for the worst so
Leave me the hell alone!

I am me, young and strong
Leave me the hell alone!

This is my life so
LEAVE ME THE HELL ALONE!

Sincerely,

-T-Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow! Powerful piece! Who are you writing to – when you say to leave you alone? We think that we all do need a "time-out" sometimes. Times when we don't want to hear any of it! You are a strong guy. For now – we'll give you your space, but we're not going to leave you alone. We're looking forward to reading your next piece. Keep your head up Lil' Jepeabo, aka Thug Prince.

To The Beat Within

What up, Beat? This Lil' June writing to you! I thank you all, for letting me write in your weekly magazine. It really helps me let go of things that I have on my chest.

I am also a better writer than I am a talker. So by you people letting me write in The Beat, it really helps me out so much. I also like all the responses and feedback you give me when I write. Those really help me out, and it also makes me think about what I'm doing wrong. Every week when you have those topics, I always have something to write about.

The main person I want to thank is Allan from The Beat. When I was at Camp, he was there trying to help me out and put me up on game. So thank you Beat, and thank you, Allan. All of you really help me out!

-Lil' June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for the thanks. The Beat really is a group effort, and when you write about your struggle to face your problems, identify them and solve them, you're an important part of that effort. For example, when you point out in this issue that the two main sources of your problems are: smoking weed and kicking it at the park — you make solving the problem possible, 'cause now you know where any solution has to start.

Thinking Inside Juvenile

There has been many times when I feel as though no one would listen. Now is an example, I'm stuck in a place I never been to (juvenile hall).

I've found a couple of people here that would listen to my problems. It makes me feel sad when I feel like people won't listen, or won't hear how I'm feeling, I don't like to keep things buried inside, it's not good for you. I would tell people with the problem I had, to find someone positive who wants to help, but don't keep your feelings dent up inside.

I always wonder how people get the way they are, but no one is born bad, there are no bad seeds, people are influenced or decide on their own what they want to. I was born good like everyone else, but I just made some dumb mistakes in my life, but I'm not a bad person. Their environment has a lot to do with it and their experience, because people have bad experiences, and aren't in a stable and loving environment they have mad memories. I believe we are born neither good or bad.

I look forward to going home and seeing my family and friends, and want my baby to be born healthy.

My mother was on drugs and didn't want me. I was too young to know, and couldn't, so I turned to a man who abused me. A baby was the only thing he gave me. Now I'm stuck in too deep and can't get out. Now she back and want me to accept it, but I can't stop crying and no one bit. I love my mom, but can't let her back.

I wanna raise my baby good and get it on the right track. I feel all alone with no one in the world. Why did God pick me, haven't I always been a good girl?

-Minlona, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're listening, along with a thousand other Beat readers. We also believe that there are no bad seeds. Problems come from not receiving enough water and sunlight (nourishment). Your family situation obviously didn't nourish you with what you need to grow. Times are rough for you right now; maybe God isn't punishing, but teaching you. You can walk away from this experience with a valuable lesson that you can teach your child. You're a smart girl, don't make the same mistakes your mother made. Be the kind of mama you've always wanted – nourish your baby.

My Life

Daddy dead.
Mommy is dying every day.
I feel like crying.
Sister on the streets
getting sold like a piece of meat.
What else could go wrong?
My grandma and grandpa won't visit — neither will my mom.
In this world everything is wrong.
My girl won't write
What's up with the people in my life?
I have been locked up and in treatment.
The only thing left for me is death, will that be next?
Nobody loves me, nobody cares.
Will there even be anyone there when I get released?
It's the only way to get out of this mess —
deceased.

-Tim, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: After reading the description of your life, we would say it's an understatement to call it hard. For we see the pain in your piece, we hear how you've been scarred. What has kept you sane throughout your life? Does it help to get involved in activities that you like? We are grateful to have witnessed such courage. Hurry up and get out so we can see you flourish.

Water Pipe

I wake up every morning and I pray that today will be different because that water pipe was the only significant thing in my life. Even though I've only used it a couple of times.

And every time we had to buy a dime sack of that killa, so I could sleep just for a couple of hours 'cause if I stay awake, I won't have the power to look into my mama's eyes 'cause every time I do, I lay in my bed and cry, and wish I could just die just to know I've disappointed her another time.

-Kerri, Marin

From The Beat: By reading your piece, we see that your mother is also a significant presence in your life. Now, what to you is more important to have and to hold — your mother or the pipe?

The Camera's Shows My Love

My love for the streets is so deep
I can picture myself in my own clothes and my own shoes on my feet
But now I'm locked down
because I was forced into the struggle
Forced into a place where
the only way to keep warm
is to sleep in a huddle
Living all day off of one meal containing beans and bread
So fed up with life that to you your only path is one to the head
Life is simple just as a child is so innocent
Don't dare try to explain
the struggle to me until you've
experience it

-Garcia, Bad News, Virginia

From The Beat: This is strong medicine, Garcia, and any photographic account of the details of it would give us a documentary we'd have to deal with as members of "the human family." We can't excuse looking the other way. What decisions will you make, once you are back on the streets. to change this dark picture? Where will you find daily support?

How I Met My Girl

It was my favorite vacation when I went to Nevada to snowboard. It was around 6:45 when I left home to go there. I had spent two whole weeks working to buy some snowboarding parts and stuff. And when I finally bought them I was so happy.

But it turns out I hardly used any of it to the fullest extent. But I was satisfied with what I had. I even forgot and left some stuff at home. When I got there, I did regret that I hadn't brought someone with me.

When I finally started snowboarding I called people out to face me and have comps. Finally, this person suited all in white and black comes up. When we got to the top of the hill we had attracted a crowd and was showing off and stuff.

So then we started a race and I beat my challenger. And when it came down to tricks, I was sure I had already won. But when my opponent went, I lost. I only found out that my opponent was a girl when she took off her face gear.

After that, we hung out the entire snow season. And that's how I met my girlfriend Vicki.

-Tim, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Cool story Tim. And since this was in the winter – double cool story. Why did you risk being away from this girl? She sounds like a cool person. How do you make her feel special? How do you plan on making up for lost time?

No Dad

Never had a dad. If I did, I'd probably be at my pad. Instead, I am locked up and sad. Just wish I had, wish I had another chance at life. Because I probably wouldn't be sitting here, looking at it.

I wish I had a dad so I could talk when I had a problem. Instead, I just drink away, hoping for better days.

-Ray Ray, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Ray Ray, we're sorry you're missing what you're missing. But we also know that, while it's tougher to get by without a dad, it can be done. Are there any male relatives you feel close to? When you can't have the real thing, you look for the next best thing. And often enough, that does just fine. You very likely need some help with your drinking problem. Ask for it. You are surrounded by some pretty fine counselors at Santa Cruz Juvy, people who do care about you and your future. You want help — start asking.

I look forward to staying clean and off of heroin. I've been using for three years.

What I Look Forward To

I look forward to staying clean and off of heroin. I've been using for three years. That's when I started coming in and out of Juvenile Hall, and I'm sick of it.

I want to do something different, because I'm sixteen years old and I think that I have to do something different now. So that's what I'm looking forward to in my life now.

To everyone who reads this — stay up. Stay off of drugs, or just use once in a while. Well, that's it.

-Francisco, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We wish you success. We wonder if you really think it's ok to use a drug like heroin "once in a while." Stay clean Francisco. Thanks for sharing your story.

My Girl

What do they see? They see a demon in me. They also see a loving and kind person. Also, an honest person.

I love my girl with all my heart. I would take a bullet for her. You don't know how much I love my girl. When I get out of the Hall. I am going to make it up to her. I am going to be straight up with her. I will tell her nothing but the truth. You do not know how much I love her smile.

When I complete my program, the first thing I am going to do is go to her house and take her out for some ice cream, and some clothes.

Just trust me on that one.

-Ricky, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Ricky, we believe you. But remember, the proof is in the pudding, as they say. It's easy to talk and harder to act. We wish you luck with your love life. But, are you willing to stay out of the Hall for her? Are you willing to change your lifestyle for her? Think about it.

How I'm Different

Well, the way I'm different from a year ago is that before, I didn't work. Before, I had my tattoos, and before, I didn't have responsibilities.

The reason I decided to change all of that was because of my lady. She taught me how to do all these things, like removing my tattoos, helping me look for jobs in a lot of different places. Mostly she taught me how to be responsible for my actions, and for the decisions that I make. For all these things, I thank the all mighty Lord for sending me this nice, beautiful, skinny bones into my life.

Thanks to Tatiana. She's helped me to change in a good way. Without her, I would still be in gangs, drugs, and into a lot of other bad stuff. I love her.

-Marcos, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You are a lucky fellow. She's helped you. And before you know it, you'll be a good example for others, and you'll be helping them. Love is powerful. Keep spreading it around. This is how we'll make a better world.

We're Not To Be Judged

Good or bad, we're neither. It's about who we are, the decisions we make, and the environment we grow up in.

I grew up around druggies and criminals. When I got older, I followed in that same path. I wasn't a bad person because I didn't know any different. That was just the choice that I made.

I've learned now that the world is not perfect, and that we all make mistakes and wrong decisions/choices, but we also make good ones. Some of our mistakes turn out to be good for us in the end.

You don't always have to make bad choices or blame it all on the way that you grew up, or the area that you lived in because you can always change your behavior and learn from your mistakes, so you` won't make the same ones that you made in the past. We always have a chance to change our future and make it better for ourselves. I am. Just remember we won't be in this situation forever. If I can do it, you can, too.

-Jenny, Marin

From The Beat: Interesting piece. Do you know anyone who grew up in a messed environment yet chose to go the other route? Does a person's surroundings always have some kind of affect on them? How do you plan on taking steps towards attaining your goals?

Why Won't Anyone Listen?

I hate this condition
I need help
please
would anyone listen?
I'm tired of wasting time and
when I speak it seems
the whole world is silent
something telling
don't let it get the best of you
I know its hard
and not everything's accessible
I'm feeling low
but still high as the birds
they don't sing when I speak
I hope they'll understand
me in words
it seems all I obtain is pain
just listen
the same
should I remain or change
again something tells me
put yourself in a position to see
but maybe I'll understand
if someone just listens to me

-DD man Granville, Virginia

From The Beat: Exactly what do you mean by "Should I remain or change"? Does putting yourself "in a position to see" mean you are getting close to some sort of recognition as to why people seem not to be listening? You do seem to be open to constructive dialogue here–a promising sign. Can you follow up?

My Change

Well, the way I have changed is that I now care about my family, and myself. Because before, I didn't care for anyone, and I'd steal from my family. But now I try to help out by taking care of my niece and by helping my mom clean her house.

One other way I have changed — I don't use drugs. I've been clean for a year and a half. I did it because I didn't want to see my mom suffering. I was a drug addict. But I've always wanted the trust of my family, and I got it back.

So now I would like to start a new life when I get out.

-Jm, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Sounds to us as if you've already started on that new life. Just keep at it. And keep the important things up front in your mind. You've made your share of mistakes, and you've learned from them. Now get on with the business of having a good life.

My Story

Living my life in this manmade hell.
Nothing to do but a story to tell.
About being locked up in a nine by four cell.
So to all the youngsters, please listen to me.
When you go with the homies and spark up some trees.
Think about four months later; you hear the cops tell you "freeze."
You think it's the cool thing to do 'cause they told you to.
But when you're locked up, they don't even bother to write to you.
When you get out you're filled with rage.
Because of your so-called friends you were locked up in a cage.
So think before you act,
You kick it with the homies
then you'll end up in Durango right back.

-Lil' Carlos, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Many people believe that their homies are all they have. And like you said, these same people get locked up and become mad. For those that don't know, friends come and go. When it comes down to it, you are the only one who'll be there to witness your life, and it's not something you have to show. What you were saying was right, but do you take your own advice? How do you know that you'll be able to stay away from friends that aren't good for you? Well, we have faith in you, but only you know what you're going to do.

When you get out you're filled with rage. Because of your so called friends you were locked up in a cage.

That One Thing

Well, the one thing that I always wanted to do was do right. On November seventeenth, I got out of SEF and I got to go home on intense probation, but one problem was that I went back to the same neighborhood and back to the same so-called friends. What I'm about to say is the truth about that one thing and that is:

Well, first of all, everyone that reads this, take it as advice. Well, like I was saying, when I first got out, I went back to the same neighborhood and I was trying to make all my dreams come true. Some of them did come true, but at the same time, I was trying to look for a job, and I had one, but the problem was that I came out dirty on my physical test. I mean I passed everything except the UA.

Anyways, check it, all I gots to say is that I need to change my lifestyle, my ways of acting, my ways of thinking, and especially my so-called friends. But like I said, take my words as advice when you or whoever gets out — stay away from all the bad crowds, drugs, and all bad things. All I know now is when I get out this time, I'm going to do everything I possibly can to do the right thing and live the right way. Be free and let people know I'm strong enough to make it and also I'm going to make everyone remember me.

-Lil' Pete, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: So you've been out and know what's to come when you get out this time. Does that hurt you or help you? Do you think you have a leg up on people who haven't gotten out yet? How? Is there anybody in the world you can call a real friend? What is a real friend? Well, we're glad you learned to look out for yourself above anybody else. Sometimes we need time to pamper ourselves, so we can be more beneficial to others.

I Look Forward To . . .

Whoa! That's too much to say . . .
cause I live my life, a heartbeat a day,
I must have been confused cause I thought . . .
toting guns and selling blow
was the way.

Better yet I look forward to a second chance,
or being with my man Moose that night.

Or better yet a chance to tell Timmy
damn that money--we gone get that back!

I look forward to not having them
coke and gun convictions on my record.

I look forward to a December release.
I look forward to tuckin them heats.
It might sound dumb but that's my protection
on them streets.

I look forward to not seeing lockup again.

I look forward to a lot, but there's nothing
I look forward to more than seeing
Moose, Timmy, Chunk, Chris,
Tweezy, Dayrun, Deion, Dole,
and the rest of them.

R-I-P Fallen Hood Legends

-Young Blizz, Virginia

From The Beat: Props on a rich revelation, Young Blizz. Your best line is "I live my life a heartbeat a day." We know you know that life is precious. The outstanding question is one that you will probably be facing for countless heartbeats: Upon release, what will you be doing to prepare yourself for a productive future away from "them Bad Newz streets," without the "heats." Cause the heat will surely keep you down, meaning, locked up or worse, dead. AS for Bad Newz Streets, we can't put your hood 's name in the piece. Next time write the city you are from, like when you say, "It might sound dumb but that's my protection on them (Mayberry) streets." If we let you put your hood's name in The Beat, we are opening it up for everyone to represent, and that's not what we are about, especially since we are guest to the system.

Hurts So Bad

My mom has hurt me the most because she was never there for me when I needed her. The way I dealt with the pain is by cutting on my arms and legs. I am still hurting deep inside because my mom was never there for me when I needed her by my side or anything.

The person I hurt the most is my dad because I told lies about him abusing me, which was a lie. No, I did not mean to hurt my dad or brother the way I hurt them on purpose. I felt really bad and angry because I didn't want to hurt them the way I did.

Yes, I did say sorry to them for hurting them, and, yes, I did make things better with them after I hurt them. Yes, I would avoid hurting others because you always feel bad about it afterwards.

-Anonymous, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: Just because you've been hurt doesn't mean that you have the right to hurt others, but it's sounds like you've learned from your mistakes. Do you have any ideas what else you could do to alleviate your pain that doesn't involve hurting others?

I ended up being the fastest in my school, so I had to represent for my school

The Future

Every time I go to my room I sit up and I try to see the future I am probably going to have. When I was in fifth grade, our school picked the two fastest runners to do track against other schools. I ended up being the fastest in my school, so I had to represent for my school, but then the day came when we ran against each other, and for some reason I beat the other schools.

I got first place in track. Then my teacher was so happy we won because our schools never won. He ran up to me and gave me a hug and told me I could do anything I wanted to because I had the heart to win. I think about that a lot — how I'm just wasting my time when I know I can be something in life.

I know if I want, I can play in any sport in the future because I believe in myself. So I'm just letting everyone know that you could become anything you want, all you have to do is believe in yourself.

-Francisco, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: We envy your ability to keep a positive attitude in a place that breeds negativity. And we also believe that you will do great things in life. What's your favorite sport? What is your least favorite? Do you plan on going to college when the time comes? What college do you want to go to? We have the utmost faith in you and appreciate the courage you have for challenging yourself so you can remain open minded in any given situation.

Stop Locking Us Up!

Most of my family has been locked up. My mom mostly been locked up all my life — from the ages of thirteen to seventeen. She always been in and out of Durango juvenile detention center.

Then when she was eighteen, she was in and out of jail. When she was nineteen, she went to prison for eight years. She came home when I was twelve. Then when I was about thirteen, I started getting into trouble and going to juvenile.

My nana was also locked up when I was ten, and that was really hard. All the rest of my tios and tias (uncles and aunts) were always locked up, too, but they were always in and out so it wasn't a big deal. But I do miss them a lot when they are locked up, because they miss out on holidays and birthdays.

My step-dad and step-mom came out of prison at the same time when I was twelve. My step-mom has five kids and her daughter is the same age as me. After our moms got married, we became close and now we are both going to be sixteen and we're always in and out of juvenile.

After our moms got to prison when we were twelve, we all became one big happy family, but then our moms started going in and out jail again, and now our older sister just went to prison.

So now me and my sister are trying to be good and stay out of jail. But it still is sad because I'm here up in Durango and now my jefita's (nana, mom) have to come and see me locked up and I still get their visits two times a week.

-Monica, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: It's a shame that your whole family is caught up in the incarceration cycle. Why do you think that is? We know being poor is one thing that often pushes folks into the system. What can we do to break this cycle? Do we have the power to change something of this magnitude? Does it just start with you? If you were the president, how would you run this country?

Why Won't Anyone Listen

I have been in several situations where I had something important to say and no one would listen to me. What I had to say was I was innocent for a crime I was accused of committing.

I got a phone call at 10:30 p.m. on Wednesday from the SF Police Department. The police told me back in June I had taken two hundred and fifty dollars from someone's backpack and there were three witnesses.

When I heard this I had trouble even reacting. I got this call the day before I had to go to court. I was already in trouble for assault and battery and was waiting for my consequence. The phone call was the worst thing, but I knew I was innocent.

I was to pay back this money, do a month in the hall, and do highway community service for a few weeks. I was already up shhh creek and I wasn't coming down. The day after the call I went to court and I have to serve five days. I am not even tripping about this place, but I am tripping about doing a couple months for something I didn't even do.

Now I need to go back to court and confront these lies. I would take a lie detector test over this and I am not going to be accused of this crime. Those other three witnesses are! But this really sucks for me because my parents don't really believe me. It sucks, but it's hard for them to listen because I am already in trouble. I hope I can get their trust back and win this case that should already be won.

-Julien, San Mateo

From The Beat: We already feel like children shouldn't be locked in cells. But we really feel like children shouldn't be locked in cells for something they didn't do. As a matter of fact, nobody should be locked up for something they didn't do. Has this hindered your ability to stay motivated? Have they taken something from you that can never be replaced? Why do you feel this way? Hopefully everything turns out good for you. But if it doesn't, there are times in all of our lives when the only appropriate response is, "Life ain't fair!"

Went Home

A breath of fresh air got me lightheaded
The feeling of being locked up is no more imbedded
I did everything I said I would do
Blazed, kicked it, not too much in a few
My little nephew has grown and aged a year
But doesn't even realize that I was in here
Didn't even sleep a bit that night
Praying when I got home everything would be all right
Smoked a pack of Newports, I couldn't resist
Smelling like trees, my moms was pissed
Most of my homeboys were there to appreciate
This one girl gave me a hickey
even though it's me she hates
The day's almost over, it's almost four o'clock
I felt like running, struggling with my mind I fought
Everything happened way too fast
Replaying it in my mind,
the thoughts from beginning to last

-Ap, San Mateo

From The Beat: When you replay those thoughts, is there anything you wish you could've done over? We see you have a lot of love for your little nephew. So how does it make you feel to know that he has grown and aged a year without realizing where you were? If he looks up to you (which he will), what do you want him to mimic? What do you want him to pretend he doesn't see? When he gets old enough, will you explain it to him? If so, how? If not, why? We hope freedom is as good to you as it is to all of us.

Coming Around

What's coming around, what's going around?
It all started with my daddy
And now I'm just acting like a clown.
Most of the time I feel like a disgrace,
Just a bunch of molecules to take up space.
Sometimes I dream of owning a mansion,
But then I wake up in my cell.
Chance after chance I get from society,
But then I just bit the hand that fed me.
I'm back in kid's jail.
I wish my mom would treat me like an adult,
I should stop acting like a kid.

-Lance, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: We are convinced that you accepting the fact that you're acting like a kid is much more mature than many of the adults we know. So you aren't far away from becoming an adult. Are you going to get released sooner or later? It sounds like you're being kind of hard on yourself, can you focus your attention, instead, on what you're going to do differently when you are released?

The One That Got Away

I can remember the first day I met her as if it was yesterday. I was at a party with my two cousins in San Jose. It was one's girl's party. I remember his girl came up to me and told me that her little sister thought I was cute. I asked her what her sister's name was and she told me it was Chantell. So I went up to talk to her, but she was acting hecka shy. When she started to talk, I couldn't help, but notice that she was thick as hell. She asked me how old I was and I told her I was a young teen. She was 15, but said she wasn't trippin' off my age. I got her number to her room phone and my cousins had to bounce back, so I told her I'd call her later. My cousins were like, "Damn Von, how you pull that?" I was like, "Damn, I don't even know."

So about two weeks had went by and I hadn't called her back yet, and I was walking out the door to go to my sister's basketball game, and my celly rings. I picked it up and it was her. When I heard her voice, I was like, "How da' hell you get my number?" She told me that my cousin gave her the number. Now she got me wanting to kill this fool for giving her my cell number, because I don't like people calling me on my cell during the day. I told her where I was going and told her to hit me back up later at night. She said she was calling me to ask if I wanted to go take pictures with her. I'm like, "Damn, girl, I just met you." But she said she was paying for everything, so I was like, "In that case, where you at?" She told me to meet her at the mall at 6:00 and to bring her cousin with me, so me and him smash up there to meet these females. They were waiting at the front of the mall for us. Before we took the pictures, the girls took us shopping and bought me and him Eagles jerseys and green Nikes. They bought themselves jersey dresses to match our jerseys and the same Nikes they had bought us. As we were walking to the picture place, I was thinking to myself saying, "Damn, I picked a good one." I was saying to myself that if she was buying me stuff and telling me she loves me after just two weeks of knowing her, then she must be the one.

After we got our pictures back, we took some to school to show our boys and they all said we had dime pieces. They were getting on us, though, because they thought we had paid for everything. We were like, "Heck nah, the females paid." They were like, "Fo' real? Do they have cousins?" From that point on, me and my cousin knew we had king females. I was proud of myself because I managed to get a female like the one I had.

So, a year and a half went by and we're still together. She was my first love, so I was acting like a straight captain when I was with her, and my boys always got on me. I didn't really care because she was hella fine and nice. One day, she came to my house crying and I asked her what was wrong with her. She told me that she was moving to Atlanta unless she could live with me. I knew she could stay with me because my Grandma liked her, but I got mad for no reason, and at that moment, I knew I had messed up a perfect relationship. Six months after she moved to Atlanta, I found out she got killed in a car accident. I felt hella bad because I could have let her live with me. I guess I was too young and scared to make a commitment like that.

Rest in peace Chantell (1987-2003); I love you baby girl.

-Celly Cell, San Mateo

From The Beat: This is such a sad story — we hope you realize that her death is not your fault at all. You couldn't have known that she would get into a car accident, and your argument before she left for Atlanta had nothing to do with the accident that happened. To be completely honest, we don't blame you for being afraid of making the commitment to live with your girl at such a young age. What are your fondest memories of the year and a half you spent together? Can you use her memory as an inspiration to do all of the things she never had a chance to do?

Life's A Trip And Then You Die

They book me and hook me
For the system's glory
No crime that I've committed
Don't give a damn about my story
But they don't care
Makin' bank by the day
People just stare
'Cause the 'hood I stay
No parents to love
Raised on my own
Streets was hard
Resort to get stoned
That led to tweekin'
Stayin' up all weekend
Drugs make me feel
Like my own human bein'
Hustle by the day
Stayin' up all night
Every step I take's
Another fight for my life
And that ain't right
For a teenage kid to live
No chance in life
'Cause of what my parents did
But life goes on
The sayin' to live by
Life's a trip
Then you die

-King Pest, San Mateo

From The Beat: We're sure you noticed that we had to switch up a word in your title — we figured you'd rather us change it up and be able to print the piece in The Beat. Other than that, this is a solid flow with some disturbing realities about what it's like to grow up without the support you need, only the streets and 'hood to hold you. We understand why drugs offered you refuge; we feel the necessity of your hustle. What is it that your parents did that resulted in you being raised by the streets? Is there another hustle to look to, one that will get you up out of the system? Can you find any time in your fight for life to truly live? Life has great happiness to offer before you die — we know that happiness can sound like another world, but is there anything you can do to start taking small steps towards a better way?

I knew I had messed up a perfect relationship. Six months after she moved to Atlanta, I found out she got killed in a car accident.

Gangster

All these wanna-be gangsters
I think of them like some wanksters
Banging red or blue, tell the truth —
You ain't true
Fighting over colors
But the only one you're hurting is your sisters
Father, mother, and brothers.

-Jay, San Mateo

From The Beat: True that. There's little we can think of to say in response to a piece that says it so clearly and concisely — we'd only add to the list of people being hurt so that it included the larger community and themselves. Why do you think gangsters choose the life they do?

Only If You Knew

Why is life so hard?
Why is my heart so cold?
Why can't I live with my mom's?
Why is the block my home?
Why are them so-called "friends"
really not my folks?
Why I carry a pistol?
Why I always say "rogue"?
Why am I an enemy to people I barely know?
Why do I look over my shoulder wherever I go?
Why am I so protective
when it comes to the fam'?
Why won't I tell you?
You wouldn't understand.
Questions you keep askin' me but
Why you wanna know?
The truth is
I'm loved by few and hated by most
Only if you knew folks and
That's what's real
This is how it is and how life is so real.

-Young R, San Mateo

From The Beat: You come with a slew of questions that only you can start to answer. Why is your life so hard? Why do you call the block your home, and not your mother's house? Why do you have friends who you can't trust as folks? Why do you pack? Why do you consider people you don't know your enemy? You give yourself an easy out when you say that we wouldn't understand. Here's our challenge to you: come with answers that we can understand. Make us understand — no one else can.

A Meaningless Word

This word is something that everyone says
With a meaning without dread
Without respect, without hope
Without nothing
It's just a word that flows in the air
That grabs at people tongues
Wanting to be wanted
Why is this word said so much
With such careless thought?
It hurts so much when said to
Me when he do not mean it
Do you want to know what this word is?
I think you know because you use it, too
Without any thought, without a clue
Love . . . a meaningless word.

-Megan, San Mateo

From The Beat: While it's tragic that the word love has ceased to have meaning for you, we understand where you're coming from in this piece. What is it about love that makes people want proclaim their love so easily, often without thought or recognition of the depth of its meaning? What would it take for love to have meaning for you? How do you define it?

Does Anyone Hear My Cry?

My eyes are soaked wit' tears
My face is feeling funny
I have a soul that has misery
And I know that no one hears me
Now see, I'm a girl who's hella ugly
That doesn't see no happiness
And that is what I'm longin' for
And everyday I wish I didn't have to be me
'Cause that's why I'm pissed!
I hate my face, nose, lips, and sensitivity
Why do I cry so much?!
Can anybody tell me?
Wait a minute
I don't wanna hear anything
'Cause you don't care about me!

As my eyes are still puffy
And feel watery
My heart burns and needs my mother's love
I'm just waiting for two more days to come around
So I can thank the Lord up above
For coming through and not letting me down
'Cause all day long
I walk around with my head down
With a frown
I'm tired of bein' hea an' I need to get out
So I can get money wit' my homegirl in town
I'm hella anxious
I can't wait
I feel like I'm earl . . .

-Clumsey, San Mateo

From The Beat: We hear your cry, and we hear it in two parts. The first part seems to be the cry of someone who is hurting for love and appreciation, someone who's searchin' so hard for something outside of herself that she can't see what she has to offer the world. The second part, though, sounds like a girl who has given up on the search — anxious to go get money and undercutting her real chances of finding the happiness she seeks. We know you're anxious, and we know how cool it can be to get out, but it's only cool if you can maintain yourself on the outs. The money won't — and can't — love you. What will it take to find the love you're searching so hard for within yourself? You're wrong when you say that no one hears you; we hear you. Do you hear yourself? You're not ugly, and it's tragic to hear that you wish you weren't yourself. Given that you can only be yourself, what are the first small steps you can take towards happiness and love for yourself?

It's Not Inherent

I don't think that being a good or bad person is inherited, but I do think that the family's lifestyle has a lot to do with the outcome of the child.

I also think the way the mother, father, brother, and sister act around the child will show in the kind of attitude the child would have. A child who has a mother and father who shows and tells the child his or her rights or wrongs would have more of a positive outcome than a child who was neglected and had to go through struggles on their own.

-Daniel B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We think you're right, Daniel. What kind of influences have you had in your life? Have you ever met anyone who had negative influences in their life but were able to overcome them?

I don't think that being a good or bad person is inherited, but I do think that the family's lifestyle has a lot to do with the outcome of the child.

standouts

standouts

I look forward to teaching my little brother some good morals and learning something that means something in life

To Be Positive

I look forward to doing good in life. I look forward to being the best that I can so my life won't be a waste of space. I need to try hard at accomplishing what I need to do to be successful so I can do what I need to so to be positive in my life.

It's like taking a bite out of something that's big and hard to chew, but if you put your mind to it, it will be easy to not be at the wrong end of the stick. So I give advice to everyone out there to stay out and use your free time wisely and positively, or else you're going to be somewhere you don't want to be.

I look forward to being with my family. I look forward to teaching my little brother some good morals and learning something that means something in life. So for all you guys who have siblings and love them, to stay out and be the best role model you can 'cause especially if you're the oldest, your younger siblings are going to follow your footsteps.

-Ju-Ju, San Mateo

From The Beat: Right on, Ju-Ju — it breaks our heart to read pieces like this that you've been dropping for months and realize that all this intelligence and hope is heading for the Y. How can you provide a positive example for your little brother, even from afar? How will you keep your eyes focused on the future while dealing with the challenges you're going to face? Despite the rocky path that lays ahead, we are confident that you will find the success you seek. What will it take to get there from here?

A Slip and Fall

how would i speak
if my middle finger was gone
pick up the phone
no dial tone
smoke crystal
i have —
come-down effects
camera room no fun
why go to camp just to run
just to smoke on the outs
or squeeze that gun
get blurped in the stolo
forget it and run
caught another case
and come back to the hall
a menace to society
but i only considered it
a slip and fall

-Picaso, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're already slipping when you go through that mess and don't learn a lesson. You're already falling through the system, but still you refuse to listen — to yourself!

Always Someone To Listen

If you got something to say and nobody listens to you, you should not get irritated or upset. There is one thing you should remember: there will always be someone to listen to you, especially your loved ones. But if people you like or might want to be friends with don't listen to you, then just let it go.

Anyway you should not depend on anybody but yourself. You on your own once you become an adult. Never depend on anybody and don't trust nobody because you never know if that person would be loyal to you or if that person would betray you in a blink of an eye. You should always have a back-up plan.

Sometimes your best friend could be your worst enemy and your worst enemy your best friend. It's easy for your friend to bring you down. Instead, your enemy got something to prove to you.

If you got an enemy for stupid reason but not because of the hate of each other, then that person is not your enemy. Don't try to negotiate things with your enemy because it's not gonna work out, it's only gonna make your situation worse. But instead turn to his personal needs. If he's interested in something and you could help him get it, then you could become his associate and maybe best friends in the future. That's how you make a person listen to you.

If that person perceive selfishness in you, then of course he's not going to listen to you. That's why you gotta make it seem like you care about the person you want to be listened to by. That's not easy even if you're not interested in that person. Sometimes you gotta pretend that you care about him and how he feels.

-Jj B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There is a lot of wisdom in this piece, JJ, and we wonder how you acquired it at such a young age. At the same time, there are things that we see differently from our older age. For example, even though we feel you when you say you should never depend on anyone but yourself, experience tells us that it's not really possible to live your life that way. There are times when you must depend on others (even if it's just to put money on your books or send you letters when you're locked up). Yes, we must all be careful about those we trust and depend on, but that is a little different from never trusting or depending on anyone. We hope you will find people in your life that you can depend on, and who will prove your trust in them was justified.

I'm Sorry

I tried to front like I didn't care
I acted stupid like shhh wasn't fair
Mom, I'm sorry I made you quit
All those tantrums and throwing fits
Times I said I hated you
Mom, I'm sorry, it wasn't true
But all you wanted was the best for me
Spent all that time and money
I messed up, yeah, I know
But mom, I'm glad you let me go
I went away, I had to grow
Three years gone, I finally know
How much you really mean to me
So for all the times I made you worry
The least I can say is that I'm sorry.

-Chinatown B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Powerful flow. Have you shown this to your mom? What have you learned that you are willing to give up to be with your mom? Will she take you back?

I Can't Wait

I look forward to going home or getting out of this facility. I am looking forward to if I get sent to a group home, a new place to be. I been here a while too long and I need some fresh air. The air is stale, food is chimmy, the clothes are old, and I can't do what I want when I want how I want.

This ain't where I want to be. I'm dying in here. I look forward to being around my family again. It's like when people say you never know what you have until it's gone I'm missing little things like the store, or keys, my own underwear, my own bed or dressers. I look forward to the day I leave and get some gum or sunflower seeds. The biggest thing is I look forward to living my life outside of a cell.

-Anonymous B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Little things like that can mean a lot when one is locked up. And these little things are things one never paid any attention to when we had them. Only now, one will appreciate even the smallest things that they had. We sure wish you had remembered to put your name so we'd know who wrote this "standout" piece.

Peaches

So full of life
So full of strive
So abandoned from everything I've ever known
Nobody loves me
Nights are cold
Days get old
And I pray to God every night
To put someone in my life that loves me
But all I get is dissed
God please help me
Show me the way
So full of energy
So want to be pretty
So want to be like everyone else
I get called names
But half of you people don't know me
God, can you hear my prayers?
(To be continued)

-Peaches, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You ARE pretty. You are beautiful BECAUSE you're not like everyone else. You'll find someone that loves you, be patient. First you need to love yourself. That means make decisions that will help you in life. You're smart and beautiful. Keep your head up!

Born To Be Wild

I feel I was brought up in a right way but ended up being wild anyway. So I wouldn't say I was born to be wild, but I was raised wild by my big homies.

If you look back at my life, it probably looks like a gangsta movie. But my life is not a movie. My life is so real. I'm tryin' to go from rags to riches like my big homie Suga Bear.

-O-Nasty B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: First, we want to thank you for taking the topic seriously and thinking about your answer. Why do you think the influence of your "big homies" was more powerful than the influence of those who raised you "in the right way?" If you had children, how would you raise them? Would you want them to follow in your footsteps?

Lonely Life — Would You Wanna Live It?

I'm in my cell
And it's lonely as hell, ain't got no roommate

My one girl, she gone down to B-Unit
My other girl, she 18, gone on home
My boy, he up in X-unit

My other girl, she on the run
Granny don't come no mo'
Sista don't write
Momma back in jail
Cousins think they too good for me
Uncles wanna touch all over you

I don't know what to do
They say, "Stay Black and die"
But I know that ain't life
You can't really live life if you ain't got nobody
That's a fact!

-Baby Juvenile, San Mateo

From The Beat: To answer the question you ask in your title, no, we wouldn't want to live your lonely life. We can't imagine how hard it is without support (and we couldn't help but notice that among your family who doesn't come to visit or molests you, you don't even mention your parents). How can you do more than just "stay Black and die"? How can you live your life more fully? We can't imagine the loneliness you feel — what's remarkable is that you're still striving despite the loneliness and abandonment.

Born to Be Wild

People think that kids or teens become bad or good due to environment. I think that's partly true, because yeah, if you live with a bad family or hang with bad friends, it's easy for that person to be bad. It doesn't mean he's not a good person inside. That person could try to be bad just to fit in with his "environment."

Just like if you live with a good family, the kid could be good at one point, yet snap at any time if he/she is a bad person.

So my belief is if a good person is meant to be good, they're going to be good and if bad then bad, because a person is not made to be or become a good or bad person. They're always going to feel their heart. Maybe if you strap the person down to a chair with their eyes taped open and make them watch all kinds of killing tapes and evil film, then maybe, but otherwise no.

-Juan B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Thank you for thinking about the question, and giving The Beat a good answer. What do you think our society can or should do to improve the environment of the children we expect to do good? How can we make that outcome more predictable? Or can we? How is a person "meant to be good or bad?" Who means it to be? Can what is "meant to be" be changed?

...if you live with a bad family or hang with bad friends, it's easy for that person to be bad. It doesn't mean he's not a good person inside.

I Look Forward To

Going to school, and getting my high school. diploma and then take off for college. I am going to expand my horizon and become a better person.

I would like to go on an adventure to the East Coast and meet new people, all kinds of people with different backgrounds, instead of staying in this troubled and corrupted city, where no one cares to listen.

-James B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Have you thought about what college you are going to yet? We encourage your desire to travel and see other places. We wish everyone had the curiosity to see things outside their immediate experience. Since you want to take an adventure to the East Coast, you might as well just find a college down there College is a good way to meet new people too.

Look Forward to My Release

I look forward to the release of my homies, so we can kick back how we use' to. I look forward my release from Camp, 'cause I'm tired of this. I look forward to my future that I'm not sure of. I look forward to life 'cause I love it. I look forward to staying out of this messed-up system.

This is what I look forward to: staying out by keeping myself occupied, setting my goals and doing something with all the time I have — because, like everyone else incarcerated, we have time to think and start taking actions on how to stay out of the system and stop giving them our money! That's just the way it is.

-Lil' Jose, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's almost like two different people wrote these two paragraphs. If you just go back to kicking it with the homies like you used to, then you'll end up getting caught up for the same foolishness you used to. If you set goals and keep yourself busy with productive activities, you'll stay out of the system and keep its hands out of your pockets. That's just the way it is.

Got My Own Problems

Why won't anyone listen? Because people livin' and dealing with their own problems. People don't have time to listen to your story, or whatever it is you need to talk about.

They look at you like, "That shhh don't mean nothing to me; I got better shhh to worry about." Feel me? You have to realize that some things you have to solve by yourself.

So my suggestion to you people out there is — you shouldn't want people in your business in the first place; so try talking to yourself or get you a journal and write down what you want to talk about.

It shouldn't be a problem; but now, if you feel what I said is not for you — then go sit on ya hands! Why won't anyone listen? Because basically you ain't worth nothing in that person's eyes! And that's pretty messed up, Leroy! Even dope knocks got somebody to listen to their foolishness!

-Emmy-Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You write with the authority of experience; and we feel you trying to share experience, strength and hope — 'cause you feel that's what The Beat's about. Yet the truth you tell, about how young folks are getting treated these days, really is messed up! We appreciate your telling it like it is, 'cause we need to see reality as it is — even to change it.

The Mothers Cry

it's lil' gato yeah you know me
i'm still locked up wishin' i was free
if i only listened to my moms or even my pops
they always told me not to carry my glock
but i couldn't stop
had to put in work for the block
now look at me i'm sleeping on cement
my family's words are now relevant
this is what they wanted to prevent
but i feel i have no conscience
so i can't listen to my head no more
it never put me in this predicament before
now it put me behind a locked door
i can't even get a soda from the liquor store
so you all do me a favor and stay away from this drama
don't be locked up like me and listen to your mama

-Lil' Gato, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What you didn't know was how all your thinking in that life you lived, was leading you here. The clues were there, but you didn't want to see them clear. Homies would disappear off the street, and you knew where they went, but you thought you were too smart, too hard, or too hell-bent. Now you know when you lose your conscience, you lose it all: home, freedom, family, comfort, love, friends — everything falls, big and small! So hear your parents' words and answer a higher call; then when your mind clears, you'll be standing tall. Yes, you've got a conscience, but you just wouldn't listen is all.

Bad Situations

For me, I kinda put myself in a bad situation. But then, I didn't — because where I stay, is gangs an' turf politics. I kick it with both.

All my brothers have been to jail, an' I got another brother that's about to do sixteen years. I asked one of my brothers why we always go to jail. He said, "It runs in the family." — I guess he like' jail!

Some people get in trouble for attention or just to have someone start to listen to them. Didn't no one listen to me until I started getting in trouble; didn't really pay attention to me until I started selling drugs an' kicking it with gangs.

But now I just keep my head up an' trust no one. I'm gone. RIP Snoopy.

-Droopy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a shame that no one listens till you get into trouble! That is really messed up. We're listening now though, and we feel you saying you don't want to end up like your brothers. It will take more than "trust no one" — you've got to get out the dope game; now you see where it will take you: not to a penthouse but the pen'!

Why Won't Anyone Listen

I've always had something to say, but not always someone I trusted to tell it to.

In my early teen years, I had problems with marijuana and alcohol. I was always searching for that person, whether it be female, counselor, teacher or family member, to ask for help; but I felt too embarrassed to ask.

Going back now in my mind to my early adolescence, I wish I had tried. I wish I had succeeded in reaching out for help rather than learning the hard way.

-Cory, 15 0Crew

From The Beat: Man, you say so much in that one phrase, "I wish I had succeeded in reaching out for help." You learned about weed and alcohol the hard way, but if you also learned how to reach out for help when you need it — you're poised for success!

I Look Forward to ...

i look forward to being at home with my mom
and to finishing camp
and to making my family proud of me
to being able to walk in and out of these doors freely
to using the bathroom without raising my hand
to no longer being minimized to the least amount of food
i look forward to weekends to go to the parties and functions
then afterwards hittin' the strip with my patnas
then going to ben's burgers and buying a bacon cheeseburger
and a large strawberry milkshake
to going to my girl's house and kicking it with her and cupcaking
to finally being able to smoke some purple
without worrying about a pee test
i look forward to not waking up at six a m
to buying a fresh pair of jordans
i look forward to being free
i look forward to these six months of camp to go by fast

-Lil' B, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got a lot to look forward to! But now be cool with that weed while you're still on probation, 'cause you might just get a surprise test! The safest policy is just to stay clean for while. Is that so hard? It's really not worth all the negative consequences, after release or here at Camp! Plus, rolling high and drunk with your patnas, who knows what could happen, ay? Be cool, okay?

Leaving The Halls

Wow, I feel tall
Tomorrow is the date to leave the halls
No more wearing other broads draw's
Or eating nasty-ass food
Staying locked down in a bad mood
I started reading the Bible
Life became better and better
Even being locked up it doesn't matter
Now my day's here for the 5th time in one year
As it comes again
I for the sixth time am sayin'
I won't be back if I stay prayin'
And that's real talk
Pray for me, tomorrow I walk

-Baby Foila GU

From The Beat: Another good flow, and some more good wishes. Follow through, Brittany, and don't let those drugs catch you up again.

Looking Forward to Going Home

I look forward to going home, getting a job, and going to school, and getting my chedda; kicking it with my family and friends, and talking about old days and what used to happen when I was on my toes.

I'm looking forward to being with my girl and expressing myself to her and being willing to live the rest of my life with her. I'm looking forward to sleeping at her house again, talking to her parents and telling them I'm here to stay.

I'm looking forward to going out on free will and going to get a job so I can afford to take my sexy girl out on a date, like, to the movies or out to eat or even just to walk on the beach or something like that. And the same goes for my family, so I can take them to nice places. Basically, I'm looking forward to going home!

-Rico, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You also seem to be thinking of home in a different way, because we remember you wanting to jump back in the fray on the double. Now you want to get responsible in your life, go to school, get a job and stay out of trouble. Follow through with that plan, and you will be a blessing to your loved ones, young man!

How Have You Changed?

I've changed--I truly believe
My thoughts within--gives me a boost to succeed
I'm stable now and wish to remain--
The better things in life
I hope to obtain
I'm happy now--I want the world to know this
A steady mind makes me more able to focus
The hard times I'm willing to fight--and think
Before I make any decisions in life
Wanna change--just give it some time
You can do it--if you're just willing
To try

-DD Man/granville, Virginia

From The Beat: This moves along with the force of your own strong determination, DD Man. Stay stable daily. Develop that steady mind. Keep hope alive, as Rev. Jackson has spoken forever. Be a "change agent" for your own future, and your family's.

In This Life I Lead

in this life i lead —
homies pullin' licks just to eat
every homeboy tryin'
to earn his stripes
while doing what he got to do
everybody think they
bigger than the next man
livin' in a crowded-ass house
with only two rooms and hella family
homies doing homies dirty
for faulty shhh
that ain't right
but that's some of these j-cats
in the game today
lil' youngstas catchin' murder cases
with gang enhancement
mom's cryin' every night
either because their son is in jail
or on the streets awaitin' their death
at any given moment
every time i leave the house
not knowing if i'll return
because it's always
death around the corner
and you know you can't cheat death
because everybody got to go
only the strong survive
in this life i lead
that's some 'hood shhh for ya
alrato

-Young Gato, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You pulled out the stops, and gave us a verbal snapshot of the life a homie leads when he's tryin'a earn his stripes. And it ain't right, from the overcrowded family home to the penitentiary where the young men go, the gangsta life you felt you had lead, ain't right. But when you say the strong survive, you need to know it ain't so! Gangsta life kills the strong and bleeds the weak. So change that life you lead!

The Bad and The Good

Well, for me, I won't judge myself, the reason being — no one can judge me but God. But as for this subject of starting out good or bad, I'll say, good!

When I was a little kid, I would say I was good. Because the city where I'm from is East Palo Alto (EPA), and that environment was full of criminals. And the reason for that is because of drugs. Drugs was the main problem in that city. That's why we were "the murder capital" in 1992.

But as a youngsta, I wasn't brought outside. The only time I came out was for schoo' and church. And as I got older, things got a little bit more under control, because I was a bit wiser and more honest.

But the people I hung around with, was the opposite of me. Yet that didn't' change me. The only thing that I took from them was respect and how you hold yourself.

To be real, it depends on you — what you think of yo'self. If you choose to be bad, then you will be bad. But if you want to be good, the you're all good. You feel me?

And I do believe that half of your behavior depends on your social environment and your family. But for me, I'm just cool as a swimming pool. And for the bad and good shhh, let God be the judge of that. And I'm out of this shhh.

-Epa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Have you ever heard these words from the Bible: "Forgive the sinner, not the sin." You say that only God is your judge, and that no one else can judge you — not even yourself. But you can judge the things you do; you can judge things you did; even if that can get confusing , too — like all the folks who claim to do bad to do good. Now maybe it can work like that for a minute, but in the long run — it seems like doing bad brings bad back to you. What do you think? Is that God's judgment, or not?

I Look Forward To ...

getting out on october thirtieth
out of a hall that doesn't care
i'll be eighteen and free as a bird
looking forward to a beautiful release
having a newport handed to me
putting my too small outfit on
smelling the clean fresh air
blasting the car up hella loud
giving my daughter all the kisses she deserves
hitting the mall and copying the fits
so i can look so stubby
so when my dude sees me
he can't wait
and kicking it with my ninjas
and telling them what to do
r i p antwan
i will forever love you baby

-Shavalier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel the joys and pleasures of freedom in your poem. We just hope you're ready for the responsibilities of being back home. 'Cause you'll be grown, at least in the eyes of the system; so don't be acting like a youngster on a mission!

Who's To Blame?

The beef.
What's it all about?
Why do you fight someone who is from another part of town?
Is it their fault?
If people wanna fight someone from another "set" why not fight the parent?
They're the ones forcing the child to stay in that particular environment.
Then go a step higher and be mad at the construction workers
because they didn't build the houses next to yours.
If you gonna do that you might as well beef with the government
because they're the ones who instructed the houses to be built there.
So who is to really blame for someone not living next door to you?
Figure it out.

-Tru B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We think you're on the right track with this, Tru. If you take it to the top, you can see who has the power and who doesn't. But even if you keep your focus on your own level, eye-to-eye, things don't make sense to us. Why would you fight for turf that you not only don't own, but for towns who spend lots of money to hire lots of police to wrap you and your friends up, and then to put you in little jails like this? We wish someone could explain this to us.

Fallen Angel

i'm a fallen angel from up above
i fell down to the town
now i'm up in the halls
bangin' on the walls
i look up at the stars every night
to see if i see a sign
but every time i look i can't see nothing
so i close my eyes and just start praying
praying to the lord to give me my freedom back
i'm asking god if i could get my wings back
the ones he took away before i fell from the heavens
but before i fell i was chillin' wit' the fallin' homies
kickin' it talkin' to god about the world
but i can't change the things that went wrong in the past
but hopefully i could change my future
i ask the lord to walk with me wherever i go but he can't
so he tells the angels from up above to come down to me
and show me the way to the stairs to the heavens
so i could be up there for eternity
i got to wait for his word and my time to go back
once i go up i'm not goin' to be in pain anymore
but all's i do down here is suffer
for all the sins i've done in the past
well i got to be out — late

-Augie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Suffering remorse for sins of the past, is the first step toward forgiveness. The next step is repentance, which is to say, a willingness and commitment to change your ways. From your writings, we'd say you've already taken these steps. The next step is to make amends. You can't change the past, but in your changed future you can become a source of blessing just as you once were a source of sin, even a curse to your victims. You can make service to others a part of your new life, wherever you go. To that extent you will have brought heaven to earth, and forgiveness will be your daily reality — "May it be on earth as it is in heaven" (The Lord's Prayer).

**i can't change the things that went wrong in the past
but hopefully i could change my future**

I Look Forward to Court on September Eighth

This is what I look forward to — I look forward to going to court on September eighth to find out what the judge is going to do with me. I went to court on August twelfth, and my PO said she wants me to go to Camp, because he wants me to be in a lockdown facility for a little while longer.

The DA wanted me to go to the Y, but the judge was like, no, he doesn't want me to go. Or he said he might let me stay here for a while longer. So, I hope he will let me stay here until I turn eighteen, and then give me a straight release home!

So, that's one thing I look forward to — him letting me stay here! But I can't get my hopes up too much, because I hella thought I was going to Camp, and now I can't.

I also look forward a lot to visiting days, so I can see my mom, dad, sister and, especially, my daughter! So I can be with them for the few hours we have together!

Another thing I look forward to a lot is getting a release as soon as possible, so I can be home with my future wife, because I miss her a whole lot. Sometimes I can't go to sleep because she's on my mind so much.

So, those are some things I look forward to. So, until next time — I love you Gabriella and Maressa. Bye!

-Matt, 15o Crew

From The Beat: You've had your emotional up's and down's in court, and you've learned to have hope but not to let your hopes get too high or they set you up for a crash if you're disappointed — and with the ongoing uncertainty of courtroom matters, disappointment is a common experience. Did we understand you correctly? Has the Y been ruled out by the judge? Are the choices now between Camp and a straight release from the Hall when you turn eighteen? If so, frankly, that's good news either way — for either way, you'll be seeing more of your family, including your daughter, than you do now! So don't get it twisted.

when you find it
you will know
what success is.

Success This, Success That

Success can be this or that.
That's if you can make success successful.
First of all, do you know what success is?
Well the big answer is,
if you completed something you should know.
Getting pass that big test
can be success.
Can you succeed to that higher point or level,
or will you fall below
that magic line?
You will find that success.
And when you find it
you will know what success is.

-Revelation, Virginia

From The Beat: This gives us both rhythm and reason–it's a kind of, well, revelation. It has insight for sure. What is the "higher point or level" that you are striving for?

No One

No listens
No one give a damn
Alone so cold
Where do I go?

No one will listen to me
'Cause I did bad things in the past
No respect for me
I'm locked up

Throw away the key
No way listenin'
You trying to show
Me the right way

But you're no better than me
'Cause you got a key
No one listens to me
When it's me

-Berry, San Mateo

From The Beat: We're listening, Berry. We want to hear from you. We've all done bad things in the past, we've all made mistakes, and we've all felt lost and hopeless sometimes. Where do you want to go? You may not have the keys (nor, unfortunately, do we), but you have the ability to start laying the foundation for your next steps. How can you show all those who think they're better than you that you can step up and come through this time with your head up, looking towards a brighter future?

On One

people ask me why am i
the way i am
i'm on one
why did i slap that girl
i'm on one
why did i bounce
from that group home
i'm on one
why when i'm broke
i rob somebody
i'm on one
why when i'm
in a high-speed chase
i hit a hundred
and hang out the car
i'm on one
why do i treat my girl
like i don't care
i'm on one
why do i scream
"on one boy"
because i'm on one
everybody need to see
don't be like me
don't be on one
this ain't for everybody
go get a girl
and chill at the lobby
don't get down like me
because my life'a have you
in these on-one streets
stay cool and safe
don't run from ya place
but me i'm'a stay low
and fo'show on ...
you know the rest
these hall walls ain't to test
i guess that's what i get
for being on one
now i get to listen to staff
and that wake up trash
make me have gas
see my on-one days
got to be hung up
for a minute
because my focus is children
even tho' i'm only sixteen
these streets ain't gucci clean
but i'm out
everybody be safe
yo' boy lil' pierre

-Pierre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You say "I'm on one" like it's some kind of acceptable excuse for abusing females — it's not. And robbing people — it's not. Risking your life and anyone on the freeway with you while you're acting a fool — it's no an excuse at all; it ain't cool. And if you hang it up for only a minute — believe it, you'll be dead or deeper up in a system where minutes will be hours, hours will be days, days will be years, and years ... wake up before you wish it was all a dream and you could — wake up!

see my on-one days
got to be hung up

Success

Success is the top
just leaving the bottom

Success is finishing
and knowing when to end

We all reach success
one way or another

Success can be the change
from disobeying to obeying your mother

Success is anything you choose
just believe and you will
succeed in what you do

-Bizzy, Virginia

From The Beat: Can it really be said that "We all reach success/one way or another"? The subject "success" needs lots of pinning down as to objectives and values. We could sit around a table and talk for a long time on such a theme.

The Camera's In the Hood

lets take the camera to the
hood and will somebody stop
and give a moment of silence
to people who's living in poverty?
I know some people don't know
what it is like to live there.
well walk with me.
young boys in the ghetto
trying to make a way of living is hard.
because some of the things
we have to do for money
these days is crazy.
if your mother works hard, and raising four
kids, that's stressful.

-K'wan, Virginia

From The Beat: You've spoken from the heart from the place you seem to know well. You've probably seen too much that would shock many people. Will "a moment of silence" change all this? How many cameras will it take to change the conditions that create poverty?

A Poem to My Baby

time is gettin' slower
slower an' slower
without you near i can't go forward
wishin' you was here by my side
all i hear is laughs giggles an' sometimes cries
without you here i can't go on
i'm feelin' weak no more strong
thinkin' 'bout the times i use' to hold you near
sweet kisses on the lips cheeks an' behind the ears
hopin' an' prayin' that i can see you soon
to me you're the stars an' i'm the moon
i never knew that i can rhyme
until one day you came to my mind
i tell myself over an' over again this girl is fine
behind close' doors nobody know what we do
that's why it's easy for me to say shanika i love you

-Brittan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Are you serious that you've never written rhymed verse before you wrote this? 'Cause you have a talent. Your rhymes are fine, your sentiment sublime, and your message right on time. When you're feeling weak, just hold on. You'll be okay if your love stays strong. We're ready to hear it, whenever you're ready to write your next love lyric.

Life Ain't To Be Played With

Life, how do you feel about life? Me, the way I feel about life is contradicting to my lifestyle. The reason why I say this is because I love life, but I always tend to be placed in situations where my freedom is at stake, like all the stuff that I did to bring me in here.

When I get out, I'm going to try to change because when I was out, I was like a lot of other people: I took life for granted. My plans when I get out is to 1.) Try to find a job, 2.) I'm going to enroll in college, and 3.) Stay out of trouble so I can maintain with my family.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are a smart young man Anthony and we hope that you find your niche in college. The more you know — the more you grow. And knowledge is power. How will you resist temptation when you are released?

To Be Cool

People weren't born evil, it's mostly the way they were raised, because almost everybody in a unit, their parents were messed up, didn't teach them manners, respect, or anything, just let their kids run wild.

If you don't believe, got to the units. Nine out of ten kids will tell you my daddy dead, or a crackhead, or I don't know my daddy, or my momma was sleeping around. On the other hand the one out of ten like me, I was taught respect, went to school, had both parents. I just got caught in the wrong group and went down the wrong path and I regret everything I've done.

I realized you don't have to do stupid shhh to be cool.

-Burns, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sounds like you learned your lesson. It's never cool to do stupid shhh, that's why we call it "stupid shhh". Now that you can see where you went wrong – learn from it. Be the person that your parents raised, you can do it!

Born To Turn Good Or Bad

When everyone is born, they're born with no common sense. They're born neither good nor bad. When people get older, the experiences they go through while growing up molds their personality.

It's not that they're bad at heart, but it's their minds that are not right. They have personal issues from the things they grew up around, and their environment. The people who grow up with experiences that are bad, that's all they know, and they don't know right from wrong. The ones who do know right from wrong cannot control themselves. Some grow out of it and realize what they're doing is wrong, and change their ways.

Those are the strong-hearted people, people who grow up in a good environment "usually" don't turn bad, but some of them are born with issues, but it goes both ways. Some who grow up in bad environments sometimes grow to be good also.

-Berry, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Strong commentary. Does this apply to you in any way? Have your experiences molded you into who you are today? Have you learned a lot from your environment? Have you conformed to your environment? Can you control yourself? Why or why not?

Lil' John Gone

Was up? This is Lil' John. My piece is called "Lil' John Gone." There's a staff that works here named "Jay" and every time he sees me, he calls me, "Juan Gone," or "John Gone" 'cause I was up in the Hall for about ten months straight for a serious charge and got a straight release.

It felt so good being out doing what I do best and doing what I pleased, but that wonderful feeling only lasted 30 days till the po-po's brought back my charge, and they brought me back to the Hall, so I jumped back into the county blues and been patiently waiting for that lovely day to come.

This time, I've spent five months and ten days, so if you total it up all, that's 15 months and ten days that I've been locked up for some bull. Then again, they call me "Juan Gone." Ain't no tellin' when I'm gone. My destination? Freedom! If you think I'm jokin', just watch!

My word is gold on this one like the Fry's commercial says, "Guaranteed." I'm out, (literally).

-Lil' John, 150-Crew

From The Beat: Good luck with getting released. Now, please don't go and waste your time on the streets. That shhh will only get you more time or deceased. If you really want to stay away from a cell then you know what you need to do, but remember to do it well.

Good Baby!

I was born into a rich family in Mexico. I was a good kid, never had problems with people. When I was six years old, I came to this country. I was still a good kid until I started goin' to elementary school.

I started to steal from Lucky's, (which is now Albertson's), and from Longs Drugs until I got caught. I had to pay for all the stuff I stole, but I wasn't trippin' though. During my 7th grade year, my brother started gangbangin' and all of my other patnas started bangin', too, so they started to influence me to bang, too, but I always used to say, "Nah."

When my 8th grade year started, I was messin' up. I started to kick it wit my brother and all of his friends. By my freshman year in high school, I was really messin' up, but I gots to go now, but I'll continue to tell y'all my story later.

To Be Continued...

-Lil' Carlos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It seems as though slowly-slowly you kept doing worse things. Do you think that it's always this way... from little things then to bigger thangs? What did you learn from all of this? If you could change one thing in your life, what would it be?

To My Bird

You are my favorite, lil sis
We may argue but it's what we do
Even though we come a new
I watched you grow
Grow and grow to where we can't argue no mo'
We have to stay strong and stick together
Like when we used to play space ships in the weather
No matter what happens, no matter what's heard
You will always be my sister, slash, bird.

-Lil Davon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sweet piece. You should give this to your sister. Family is one of the most important things in life. Are you setting a good example for your sister? We bet she looks up to you. Be the kind of big brother that she can look up to.

Why Won't Anyone Listen

There is a reason for everything and there must be a reason why others won't listen.

My family as well as a lot of my peers have turned away from what I've had to say, due to my past. I have lost a lot of much needed trust and now no one will listen.

As much as it hurts I know why this happened to me. All the advice I have to offer to those who still receive attention, just be yourself, don't try to be someone you're not because it can get you into trouble or make others not want to be around someone fake. The only person you have to impress is yourself.

-D-Minus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: D-Minus, we also believe that everything happens for a reason. Do you think that there is a way that your family and friends will ever forgive you? If they turned away from you because of your actions, maybe the way to redeem yourself is also by your actions. You have a point when you say – "The only person you have to impress is yourself", but WHAT impresses you? Someone who is rejected by his or her family? Obviously not! So, what kind of decisions can you make that will not only impress yourself, but others as well?

Family Cries

My family's cries go beyond fully's and mack's
It goes to backyard hustlin' wit' OG's watchin' my back
My family's cries are bigger than 28 grams of crack
Bigger than pimps puttin' 100-pound females on the track
My family's cries is a struggle so I can never say they're whack
My family's cries took my cousin,
But the beef was so strong, folks were dying by the dozen,
But I'm livin' in memories of my cousin
My family cries are as soft as a woman,
But when he died, he didn't see it comin'
Them bullets came a 100 miles, runnin'
My family cries are the reason I was stuntin'
And the struggle made most folks see that I
Was comin'
My family cries are as soft as a woman,
But I'm glad my family's cries made most folks see me comin'.
RIP Ray-Ray and Ania

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's evident that you've been through so much pain. But in the mean time we hope that you maintain. Remember, as humans, we all go through some degree of pain but it isn't the struggle that defines our character but the way in which we deal with our struggle.

My family as well as a lot of my peers have turned away from what I've had to say, due to my past.

W're All Different

No one was born bad and no one was born good. People are raised different ways and the way they're raised affects the choices they make in life.

If someone was raised by parents who was dope fiends and didn't care 'bout what they're kids did then the kid would probably grow up to be a bad kid who would probably be in and out of the Hall a lot. But if you grew up with parents that cared for you and wanted the best for you, you'd probably never even step foot inside a Juvenile Hall. That's usually the way things turn out, but in my case it's different.

Growing up, my mom cared for me and wanted nuthin' but the best for me, it was my stupid choices that landed me in here. I've messed up a lot and since June I've been in here four different times.

To some people that ain't shhh, but to me it is shhh. I go to court for the second time tomorrow, and I hope God answers my prayers and lets me go home. I don't know if he will though 'cause I've asked for too many favors, but I hope he does.

-Dillon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Praying is the only thing you can really do now. But remember whatever the outcome is, when you go to court, you need to change your behavior. You don't want to end up I this situation again – obviously. If you got time to do, well take care of your business. If you get off and go home, even better. BUT, that means you need to change! You want to – so do it! Don't be afraid to ask someone for help. Your mom will be there for you, just listen to what she has to say. She wants the best for you; learn how to get it – the best.

First Day Home

I look forward to going home on the 24th of August so I can be with my family because I am tired of being in this place, and I miss my loved ones, and I know they miss me, too, and most of all, I miss my wife.

I'm ready to go home and do the fool with her, if you feel me on that note, but another thing I look forward to doing is getting back in school so I can be something in life because if you don't finish school, you can't be anything in life, so that is my best bet.

And I know that there is going to be a lot of bad things in the way of me doing good, so I have to keep my mind straight, but after I get out of school, I plan to go to a junior college, or to a trade school so I can learn some new things and meet new people, and explore life because there is more than just Oakland and the street life.

That is all I know right now and I wish I would have learned my lesson sooner and listened before I got in here.

-Lil' Shan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What we see in this piece is a young man with a good head on his shoulders and a clear mind. We wish you the best with all that you do on the outs and we know that if you put your great mind and talent to use — you will go far!

I'm Missing You, Everyday I Hurt

To my father is the first who I miss the most and dearest to my heart, he was there for me and if he were here today I would not be in this situation.

He has been gone nine years of my life; it was precious when he was here. Daddy I miss you and everyday I hurt.

This is to my brother. Bruh-bruh was there when no one else was. He gave me my first bundle, my first pistol, taught the game to me and I learned fast, he showed me how to get money, but he also told me to stay in school, and I did. It's been a year and a few months since he's been gone. Big bruh I miss you and everyday I hurt.

To my baby mother, girl without you I don't know where I would be today, we been together five years.

You and I have been through our fair share of hard times, but we still stuck with each other and I love you for that, you were there when I needed you the most, my lil rider female, the love of my life, and I can't wait 'til you have my son, baby I love you, I miss you, and everyday I hurt.

RIP Bruh Bruh, Big D, Daddy James, EJ, Deshane, Big Tone, Lil Jermee, Man-Man

Sincerely,

-T-Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thug Prince, nice piece. There are people in our lives that pass, that we can never replace. All we can take with us is the lessons that they teach us. Think about what your father and your brother taught you, and teach your son. What kind of example do you want to set for him? You've been through it. What can you teach him? It hurts when we lose those people that we love. Who loves you? Do the decisions that you make, put your life in danger?

It's In My Bloodline

I don't know why I am wild. I guess it is in my blood. I don't think I'm wild, but the things I do make me look like I'm wild.

I sell drugs. It's a habit. I tried to quit, but I be eatin' so good that it's hard fo' me to quit. I hope I can quit someday, 'cause this ain't it — comin' back and forth in here have a ninja sick! You ain't bad if you sell drugs, 'cause somebody's got to do it. And it just so happens that somebody is me.

Bein' a D-boy is the life I chose, but someday I wanna get out the game and get a real job. I done lost a lot of ninjas to the game, and if I don't get out now, I might end up the same way.

But if I can't get no job, I'm either gon' sell drugs or rob. Fo' people that been through it, you know what I mean. (RIP: Mat, Ju-Ju, ANT, Elmo, Young Raym, Big Dog, Shitty, Ju-Smokes)

-Young Mighty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "If I don't get out now, I might end up the same way." In light of that realization — how hard do you try to get a job? How many days are you on the grind? How many days are you out looking for work, putting in app's, asking for referrals?

The Future

I look forward to being released and doing good and doing whatever I could do to stay out of here and try to make it to the NBA and live a good life.

And seeing nice fine women, hopefully a good one so I can marry and have some kids. And buy moms a big house.

And if my brother needs some money or a place to stay I will give it to him just as well as my sister.

-Demetrius, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have a good heart and we like that. What are the qualities that you look for in a woman? What will be your first step towards attaining these goals?

Choices

I don't think that anyone is born to be good or bad. I think it's the choices they make throughout their life. If you choose to be around bad influences and do the wrong thing and refuse to change, then you're going to turn out to be a bad person. Same goes for a good person.

Some people make bad choices. Some make good ones. But it all starts at home and with what your parents teach you.

-Tru B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do you think every child has the same choices put before them? In other words, is it easier from some people to make good choices because they have more good alternatives to choose from than others? How can we improve the possibilities that every child has to choose from?

Thankful

I'm thankful for parents.
One, 'cause without them where would we be.
Two, they loved each other enough to bring me in this world.
I'm thankful for God.
One, for making humans, plants,
and animals for me to care for.
Two, He made a life for me to enjoy.
Three, He loves all who believe in him
and for those who don't,
He tries to get them on the right track.
I'm thankful for family.
For all reasons, loving me the way they do.
Thank you.

-Bilal, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice piece. Life becomes more precious, when we are thankful for all the things that surround us and we learn to appreciate all aspects of life. Keep a positive attitude, and you will be surrounded by positive things.

i'm going to better my life by starting a newborn life for myself

Retiring From The Business

i grew up in the town bustin' glocks
before that i was servin' knocks
livin' in the town is some crazy biz
look at a ninja wrong he'll empty a clip
i was on some ol' other tip
hittin' licks then break down some bricks
to come up on a grip
if a ninja said somethin'
he wound up wit' a busted lip
this is the way i was taught
it ain't my fault
it was the way i was brought up
so this is my poem
if ya got a problem wit' it
that's just how i spit it
straight as a bullet to the dome

-Young Tezz, 150 crew

From The Beat: Nobody's saying it's your fault, what you were taught in the past. But look now, you grew up fast! You're not just a son to an absent daddy, you're an absent daddy to your son. So you need to break that sorry tradition that you've taught, 'cause your son deserves better than what you got. It's on you now, you're old enough to take responsibility for how you live — keep on taking till you take a fall, or learn how to give your all!

Newborn Life

my newborn life
is going to come out right
because i have a newborn life
coming into my life
and i want my newborn
to come out right
because my life was not so good
i am sure that my newborn
won't have to go through
what i went through
i'm going to better my life
by starting a newborn life for myself
because if i keep doing
what i been doing
i am going to end up in the pen'
so my newborn life is starting to begin
because without a newborn life
my life is just coming to an end
so as my newborn life starts i want to try
i will succeed in my newborn life

-Lil' Hemer, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can feel the intensity of your desire to stop living the same old way and start living a new way of life. Your heart is in the right place, full of love for your newborn. Now day by day, just keep doing the next right thing, okay?

My Regret

I was at a program and talking to my girl. At the end of our talk she told me that if I cared about her I would stay and do my time, and then get out and go to school. Then I'd get a job and especially, I would quit using drugs.

So what I regret is the bad decision to run from my program and start using again. For that, I lost her, and I regret that, a lot.

When I am locked up, she is the only one who helps me out. And she was always there when I needed her.

-Diego, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: That's a big loss. We understand your regret and hope you've learned your lessons from that sad experience. Can you try and get her back again?

When I Get Out

What's happenin' Beat Within? This is you' boy, Bizzy, from Hayward. I'm sittin up here in the Hall, just waitin' for a home supervision release.

I was originally being sentenced to Camp Sweeney for six months. Then I went to court and spoke to the judge about how important freedom is — she is sending me home on my birthday!

I'm about to be eighteen on August twenty-fifth, and I'm ready for a drastic change in my life! I miss my family and ladies, hella bad. I'm not going to take advantage of my shot at freedom to do bad; I'm going to take advantage of it to do good — it's all gonna be for the good!

-Bizzy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know you've been wanting to make changes! And when you told the judge, and she gave you a shot at it — it's way cool! So let your release on home supe' be a tool for your long-term good! Props, congratulations, and happy birthday!

Big Samoa And Imay's Page

Sharing My Struggle

A lot of people judge a person,
but know nothing about their struggle.
So I'll share apart of mine.

Taking baths and washing clothes in your neighborhood just for food.
Hungry, hoping the pain will go away,
but ended up being hungry all day.
Walking back and forth hoping somebody would see me walking by
if only just to have sex.
At least I can lay down off my feet.
Walking till there's sunshine, 'cause there's nowhere to lay my head
And when the cocks crow
being thankful just that I'm not dead.
Many nights cold,
my fingers froze and my foot hurt with blisters the size I've never seen.
Seeing looks of disgust, but no one giving a hand without a plan.
(To be continued)

-Imay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Imay, these are horrible struggles. You are truly a survivor. What would you say to a young lady that is going through what you went through? What happens to a person that has to go through these struggles? How can one overcome them? People do make the mistake of judging others, without knowing their struggles. Maybe the lesson here is – we all have struggles, and our actions are based on past experiences, which take a lot of time to overcome. Instead of judging others, maybe all of us need to practice patience, tolerance and understanding.

Why Wouldn't He Listen?

I got a lil' cousin who would always want to roll with my lil' brother and me; but the kid just wouldn't listen. I would let him kick it around us sometimes just to smoke or maybe drink, ya' feel me? But, when it was time to go to a party or handle some stuff, I would tell him he couldn't come.

He would get hella mad and start trippin' stuff like that. Every time my brother and me would go somewhere, we would usually end up chunking 'em with somebody, so we wouldn't let him go, ya' feel me? He was only a young teen.

Then, my brother and me got locked up and he didn't have anyone to tell him to stay by the house. Next thing I know, he walked into the unit I'm in. That kid wouldn't listen. Now we're in max…together.

-Big Samoa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice writing Big Samoa! That's usually how it goes down. Even the ogees can't teach a youngsta the right way of life. The youngstas need role models… can ya feel that? When you get out, can you be a good role model for the beegees?

Born Bad

We are all born bad. Everybody is born bad, even yo' mama. It's true; just read the Bible, but also pay attention to babies.

When you see a mamma with a baby, you see, she smacks him because he's doing wrong. He doesn't know he's doing wrong. It's just that he's born that way. It's not their fault. It's just we're all born that way.

That's why when we grow up, our mamma's need to help teach us what's right, but some people don't listen, and they want to stay bad.

But you can learn right, but you will have to want to.

-Big Samoa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Hmm… Interesting perspective. How do you define "bad"? What have you learned in your lifetime? What do you think about the idea — that all of us are born good, and then we sometimes, unfortunately learn to be BAD? Maybe in your scenario, the baby isn't doing bad, but the mama smacking him/her is the real "Bad". What do you think?

you can learn right, but you will have to want to

Walking back and forth hoping somebody would see me walking by if only just to have sex. At least I can lay down off my feet.

Mother

A mother with dreams to be this
To be that in life
Such high hopes before dope
She knew how to cope
Life went on and she was alone
Everything she loved was gone
How can this be?
Why me?
God help me to see
The one thing I enjoyed in life is taken from me
My children separated
How could this be?
Not me
Is it a dream or reality?
I wake up and it's still pain inside of me
Why?
Lord all I want is my children next to me
So I hold on and I will be strong
God won't leave me alone
And I know he feels my pain
That only he can change
So I hold on and I will be strong
It won't be long

-Imay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Dope can really mess us up. Having faith in God is a good start, but remember, we also have free will. It's our free will that usually gets us into trouble. But it can also get us out of it. We can learn how to make positive decisions and get positive results – What do you think?

Friskie's Page

Why Not Me?

Family comes first,
So why am I always last?
You say you love me
I'm just a thing of the past
You're always there for the rest of the world,
So why aren't you there for me?
Am I not of importance to you
Just because I'm not free?

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: This is a short but razor sharp indictment of your family. Is there anything you can do to share this message with your parents? If not, who can you look to for the support you need — and deserve — as you work through these tough times?

I am starting to have more pride
And I'm starting to show
The reflections that
come from inside

Fast

I lived life way too fast
Now I'm locked up
No trace of a childhood in my past
I never grew up
I was just grown
I had to do what I needed to
Just to get my own
If someone asked you to describe me in one word
You would automatically say "fast"
But I would take it all back
Even though I had a blast
Too fast, too furious
The kind of things
I did would make people curious
But it hurts me still today
It is okay to be fast
Just make sure it is in the right way.

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: What will it take to slow down at least temporarily, so that you can give yourself time to consider the decisions that face you? Without the trace of childhood in your past, what will it take to find a positive adulthood in your future?

Without You

I feel so hopeless
I am without answers
I don't know what to do
What am I
Without you?
I feel so scared
I have nowhere to go
I don't know
What to do
What am I
Without you?
I feel mislead
I have found no truth
I don't know what to do
What am I
Without you?
I feel used
I am so badly hurt
I don't know what to do
What am I
Without you?
I feel so lost
I can't go on
I don't know what to do
I am nothing
Without you.

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: It is clear that despite your statements to the contrary, you are someone without this person. Further, you're not just someone, you're a talented writer who is feeling her way through the traumas she's experienced, searching for a higher ground. What will it take to pick the pieces of this broken relationship off the ground and start putting them back together? How can you slowly start to find your way again?

In Between

I'm a girl gone wild
But when I was younger
I used to be a good child
I used to be so nice
Now I can be mean
I guess I don't know what I was meant to be
I'm stuck in between
I used to play in the park
I guess I've changed
'Cause now I sneak out after dark
I used to stay faithful
I'm not sure what to do
'Cause now I want to be extremely playful
Now I'm kickin' it
I'm up in the Juvenile Hall scene
I don't know
I guess I'm just stuck in between . . .

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: The feeling of being stuck in between is one that we've all shared, and one that's especially apropos in the Hall — the Hall is almost the very definition an in between place, with people going from the Hall to rehab, group homes, camps and ranches, CYA, YA alternatives, the Pen, and the outs. When you find a calm moment, in which direction does your heart pull you? Is it in the same direction as your head tells you you should be headed? You're in between being a child and being an adult as well as between walking the path back toward freedom and the path towards the center of the system — how will you choose your way?

If someone
asked you to
describe me in
one word
You would
automatically
say "fast"
But I would
take it all back

Reflections, Part II

I am starting to have more pride
And I'm starting to show
The reflections that come from inside
The outside is a reflection
Of what the world wants to criticize,
But the reflections of my heart
Is what the world should prize
These are the reflections of my heart
This is Reflections, Part II

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: How can you make the reflections of your heart outshine the reflections of what the world wants to criticize? What will it take to prize what's inside independent of what others see?

Lil' June's Page

No More

no more kicking it at the park
no more drinking alcohol or beer
no more smoking that good purple, blacks or cigarettes
no more popping them ecstasy pills
no more robbing any kind of people
no more catching dumb ass cases
no more going to juvenile hall or santa rita
no more letting people down who help me
no more lying or stealing from people
no more disrespecting my stepmom
i say this because if i don't stop
i will go back to the old me
and i don't want that
until next time this youngsta is out

-Lil' June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a great set of goals. Maybe you should put a copy of this on your wall. While practicing the underlying spiritual principles of honesty, respect, and compassion; look for progress not perfection. (And don't listen to homies, 'cause they don't want change — and they'll try to make you feel shame.)

The Beat Within

to people who need help
have faith in yourself and others
expect consequences for your actions
be respectful and positive
endure what you do in life
attend school every day
the streets will not educate you
while at school join programs and sports
ignorance will get you nowhere but jail
trust your family and god to help you
have some goals in your life
intelligence will get you far in life
you need to have control over yourself

-Lil' June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem in free verse, is full of wisdom. Plant this wisdom so deep in your heart that when foolish thoughts assault, you will no longer volunteer for unwanted results.

Future Plans

I look forward to getting out of Juvenile Hall and going to Camp Sweeney for however long it takes. After Camp Sweeney, I will go to Treasure Island Job Corps Center!

I also look forward to learning and practicing real estate as a trade while I'm at Job Corps. Then after graduating from Job Corps, I will transfer to a four-year college and continue to work in real estate, that way I can make good money while I'm getting my education. And those are the things I'm looking forward to, right now.

-Lil' June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like an ambitious but fundamentally sound plan. You may not be able to carry a full class load while working as a realtor, but otherwise there's no reason you can't do both! Now, take it one step at a time and one day at a time!

Why

why don't i know my real mom
why is my dad in and out of jail
why did my grandmother have to die
why do i not know all of my family
why do i move from place to place
why do i smoke weed
why do i drink alcohol
why do i pop pills
why do i always come to the hall
why do i make dumb choices
why don't i get a job
why does my step-mom take care of me
why did i rob people
why do i fight people
why did i not return to camp
why did i let my p o and step-mom down
why don't i change my life around
why do i kick it with bad people
why don't i find why i do all these things
and change them —
i will change them

-Lil' June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The journey to understanding why, is a lifelong affair. Meanwhile, make a firm decision not to do these things. Then, get real about your "triggers" — the things that set you back on that negative path. You've already written about two this week: weed and the park. Continue to write, continue to search for answers. Meanwhile, don't pull any trigger that will blow away your best chance at getting and staying free!

Change

to me change is a big thing to do
and it is not as easy as it sounds
trust me i know
i have tried to change so many times
and for some reason i always fail
but this time it is all over
i am going to change
and i will not let no one stop me or get in my way
i know i could do anything if i put my mind to it
and that was my problem before
i was not putting my mind in it
so this time i feel it and want it
i will change for my family that i have left
and i will change for myself
until next time this youngsta is out

-Lil' June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel the intensity of your desire! And it's all good. Because you've hit on a crucial point: without a real desire to change, without truly wanting to change — it is impossible to do. Even with your desire to change, you'll find a competing desire to backslide. There'll be war within, but a war you can win!

why don't i know my real mom why is my dad in and out of jail

Lil' June's Page

What Is White?

white comes in colors
white is a state of mind
white allows attorneys and presidents to commit crimes
white is a state of mind not color
white is a color that is excluded from the rainbow
white is a piece of paper
white are the handful of families who own most of the wealth
white is cocaine
white is heroin
white is factory pollution
white are the laws of justice buildings in washington
white are interrogation lights execution papers
white is an attitude isolated from all colors
white are fangs of jaguars
white is an attitude that disrespects any differences
white is a blank page an illiterate cannot fill
white is a face full of revenge
white are gravestones
white is a place you escape to when you escape yourself
white are scars on my wrist from handcuffs
(that is what white is)

-Lil' June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a sophisticated and powerful poetic condemnation of a ruling elite that goes unpunished by law because it "is" the law; a lyrical protest against injustice from the point of view of an incarcerated (drug addict?). Perhaps it was written to explain what prisoners of color mean when they attack the political and economic status quo as "the white man" — but June, give the original author credit, ay? Then tell us what this poem means to you, okay?

Why I Wouldn't Listen

I think the reason some people won't listen, is because they did not have anyone to tell them right from wrong when they were younger.

Like me, I had no one there to tell me right from wrong, and that's why I am the way I am. But I will change on my own. Actually, my two brothers were there, and that's why I look up to them — and have so much respect for them — and love them so much!

-Lil' June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Without someone there to raise us with loving attention, we're "taught" by peers or OG's, who don't even know what we most need to learn. Now you know what you need to learn, so you can now begin (with help) to teach yourself.

Those Who I Let Down

There are a few people who tried to help me out, and all I did was let them down! The first person, is my probation officer at Camp Sweeney.

She was doing so much for me, liking taking me to go get my identification card at the DMV. She was even getting me into Treasure Island Job Corps Center! She took me down there one day so I could enroll and go for a tour. All I did was let her down by not returning to Camp when I was supposed to.

The next person who I let down, was my mom. She was also doing so much for me, like keeping me busy with positive stuff — and trying to tell me to choose my friends wisely, because in the long run, my friends would not be there for me.

As you probably already know, I didn't listen. She was right though, because none of my friends even write me while I'm in here. So, I did let my mom down — and I want to say I'm sorry to those two people, my PO and my mom!

But, most of all, I let myself down.

-Lil' June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Remorse is an essential component of recovery, and you are trying to recover from what we call "hood disease" — but whatever you want to call it, it's the life style that keeps bringing you back to the Hall. We call it a disease because it causes you suffering, and it's rooted in sick thinking. Apologizing to those you let down, is part of getting your mind right and accepting responsibility for past actions. However, it too can become part of the disease; then it's called the "I'm sorry's" — because you say you're sorry but keep on doing it. So tell yourself you're sorry; then do the next right thing. Always stay focused on doing the next right thing — and you'll be okay.

Why Do I Do ...

Why do I do the things that I do? I don't know why! Maybe because I'm always high! I need to change my ways before it gets too late. I need to stop acting up. Sometimes when I do something wrong, and get in trouble for it, I will realize I was wrong, after the fact.

My main problem is smoking weed and kickin' it all night at the park. That's why when I get out, I will not go back to the park. I will go straight to Job Corps on Treasure Island. That is the only way I can get my life together at this point.

If not, I will end up going back to the park and kickin' it — and I might end up catching another case. If I do, I will go to Santa Rita because I'm already eighteen. I have to be coo' — and it is all up to me, myself, and I! Until next time, this youngsta is out!

-Lil' June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Responding to another one of your pieces, we advised you not to go to the park — and here you are telling yourself the same thing! Yet you also seem to say you're powerless to stay away from it on your own. If so, you need to surrender to a power greater than yourself; it can be Job Corps for a while — but eventually it has to be something inside your skin, your heart, your mind, your soul. Don't go back to the park at any time, period. Find AA or NA meetings and go there instead of the park.

My main problem is smoking weed and kickin' it all night at the park.

To My Girl

you and me are meant to be
i never realized it but now i see
all i want is you in my life
and if it is possible i will make you my wife
i know i did you wrong in the past
but this time we will make it last
i love you and you love me
together and forever we will be
girl i love you with all my heart
and i cannot stand us being apart
i just want us to be together
and make this thing last forever
these are things i want you to know
but now it's time for me to go

Until next time — love you baby! I wrote this for you, girl, because you are always there for me when I need you. Even when I get locked up, you are here for me. These last three years been great! Let's just keep it going! Until next time, this youngsta is out.

-Lil' June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So when you feel lost in the dark, hurt and confused in your heart, don't go smoke in the park. Find love's spark! No park, no weed; 'cause love is all you really need!

Moe Butter and Adogg's Page

Do Or Die

in east oakland, it's do or die
ninjas stay gettin' shot by drive-by
an' drug trades that went bad
ninjas hit two-eleven just to get by
'cause they ain't eating right
forget that — if i ain't eating right
i'm takin' food out the next ninja mouth
so that why i say do or die
'cause i know for darn well
you don't want to die
so do what you got to do
if it's good or bad
i ain't trying to lead y'all
down the wrong path
but it's do or die
so the people that ain't livin' a hard life
come to east oakland an' see what's up
i bet you be running back to the suburbs

-Moe Butter, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You got it kinda right, but it's do and die — if you continue to try and make doing bad do you good. 'Cause in the end, it just never would! You'll be eating in the pen' with "do or die" tattooed on your skin, or buried in the ground when — it doesn't have to be like that. Yes, getting by is serious business in neighborhoods delirious with crime and poverty; but doing good to get by, is the only way to end up to be happy, healthy and free.

My New Hustle

i used to post block on my spot
and serve up straight knocks
get high and get down
and play with them chops
but now my ways are changed
and i have a new hustle
not to rob steal and grind
and not to have to struggle
my beats are my product
and my rhymes are my sale
a new-found job
not bound for jail
when ninjas lay tracks
they lay down the paper
therefore i'm makin' no haters
i'm from fremont
and thats where i'll be
so if you need instrumentals
just holla at me
i got bars and got beats
that no one can make
because they come from young Ashe
a ninja you can't break
so holla at ya boy
for those who know me
and if not catch me
when my album drops
and thats for sho' homie
stay up

-Adogg, 150 Crew

From The Beat: As skillful as you may be, you can't just hang with homies and wait to be discovered — 'cause you'll end up doing more time in here than doing studio covers. Keep your skills sharp, but put a plan in place and start to move on it. Step one, get a job with steady pay; then find a studio and volunteer to help in whatever way. After a while, someone with style and a need, will recognize your talent and bring your fame up to speed.

Witness To a Homicide

land of the homicide
it getting ugly
ninjas stretched out
like yo' baby'mama tummy
got hit one time
boy it ain't funny
watch how them boys go eighteen dummy
yeah i been a witness to a homicide
but i ain't snitchin'
seen ninjas get shot
but i ain't trippin'
got to keep my eyes open
'cause i ain't trying to be next
i got shot one time in the back
when lil' mickey got killed
my other ninja that was there got away
four months later my ninja lil' jerm
got shot seven times
and he was only fifteen
damn who would want to kill a fifteen year old
two weeks later
i came to jail for a punk lil' two-eleven
what about dude that kill' my ninja
now i'm on my way to camp
but i still got to go back
to the "land of homicide"
r i p lil' jerm, mickey, an' lil' de'shan

-Moe Butter, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's twisted, sick, and terrible but true, that homicides are happening right in front of you. It's worse than ugly, worse than sad, worse than tragic, nothing's bad as killing young teens in the streets! And if no one ever snitches, killers run free for a time, free to kill more before they lay dyin' by the hand of revenge; and it keeps going on and on over and over again. The only solution is to remove yourself from the pollution, refuse to be part of the problem! And by the way, it's no excuse for robbing — killing, robbing, and gunplay, go hand in hand; okay? May no more teens come to harm in the streets: RIP Jerm.

People Don't Want to Listen

A lot of people don't listen because they don't want to listen. Therefore, I say — do something to stand out, and make them listen! Write, or rap, or whatever you do best, as long as you get your point across. That's how I see it.

And that's what I do. But I don't care who else listens, as long as the people I'm trying to get through to, listen — my family, my friends and my girl. The rest can say and think what they want, because it ain't having and won't ever have any effect on me, as long as you don't put your hands on me.

-Adogg, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Who are your friends? Do they help you stay free, by setting an example of living responsibly, or do they influence you to get caught up, out there doing risky stuff? You need to take your talent beyond the park, 'cause you'll never catch fire with your spark, if you kick with homies in the dark.

I don't care who else listens, as long as the people I'm trying to get through to, listen

Sho Moe and Lil' Bugga's Page

Missing You

sitting here in my room missing you
all i can do is miss you
i try to compare your beauty to something earthly
but no waterfall-scape can compare
you are heavenly
heart as pure as the essence of love
i place you on a pedestal above everything
you're the reason i keep breathing
your love is my air
without it i would stop being
when i sit here missing you
all thoughts are of holding you close to me
i can smell your beautiful scent
you're so beautiful
you must be god-sent
just thinking of you gives me strength
days months years i don't care what length
as long as when it's over i have you
your touch your angelic voice
if i could i would talk to you till i lost my voice
for you i write poems till my mind's empty
every word i write comes from my heart and soul
for you i would walk on hot coals
my soul burns missing you
but i tell myself i will have you
but till i do i will sit here in my room
missing you makes me feel i am in a tomb
for now all i can do is miss you
sitting here in my room missing you

-Sho Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Such poems of love and hope, give the spirit a home, even when the body is lost in a tomb of loneliness and gloom. Take the strength love gives you, and use it as pillow on which to rest your heart, soul and troubled mind. For with love, even a broken heart, a wounded soul, can heal and become whole over time.

Stolen Heart

my heart is missing but already found
it was stolen with the sweetest sound
when she said — i love you
that's when my heart left my chest and became my boo's
she stole my heart and my breath away
i love you is all she had to say
her voice was tantalizing
and her beauty mesmerizing
she stole my heart with love
she stole it with all the intentions of love
now when i think of here i am light on my feet
as if i walk on clouds but i can't achieve this feat
but there is no need with my girl by me
because she makes me whole and i see
the true beauty of life
and wish to make her my wife
her beauty is boundless
and i must confess
that i love her with all my heart
and i am glad she stole my heart
to my baby girl thuy i love you
for stealing my heart
sho moe and thuy for eternity

-Sho Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You say her love makes you whole, and we believe you feel it in your soul. If only you'd felt that way, the day you thought you needed more, a toy to pass the time when you feel bored. Ah well, it is a miracle of love, that it's there for us to find — when we escape delusions of our troubled minds.

What's up to all my dead people, this is Lil Bugga.

Rest And Peace

What's up to all my dead people, this is Lil' Bugga.

I writing y'all because I really miss y'all and I wish that all of y'all was still here with me right now as this day.

But anyways I am really missing y'all Rev, Big Dog, Shitty, Pooh, Fila, Ju-Ju, Elmo, Tracy, Meeche, Verlon, Marcus, and all the rest of my dead people.

I hope y'all is in a good place right now and I hope y'all stay there until I make up there with y'all because I am missing y'all too much and I love y'all and be safe.

Save me a spot for I can come with y'all, okay. Love y'all. Loving and missing y'all,

-Lil Bugga, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ouch! Lil Bugga, it hurts when our loved ones are gone. Is your life in danger? Who will miss you when you're gone? How or when will all this violence stop? Is there anything you can do to live a safer life? Life is so precious. Live it to the fullest, which means taking care of yourself. You can have a long, beautiful life ahead of you. How will you spend it?

Best and Goodest Mom Ever

My mom is a very good person and she would always be a good person, but I keep on getting took away from her. Because I am always doing bad stuff to get me took away from her, that's why.

In seven more days, if they let me go I am going to promise her that I would not get in anymore trouble to get took away from her anymore.

My mom be telling me stuff, sometimes I listen and sometimes I don't listen. But I regret that. So if they let me go in seven more days I am not going to get in any more trouble to get took away from my mom.

I cannot keep putting me and my mom in this situation anymore, because it ain't doing nothing but hurting the both of us.

I promise that me and my mom will not be going back through this anymore. I promise you that.

-Lil' Bugga, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel that you are sincere, but how do you plan to stop this cycle of getting caught up? You need to have a plan, otherwise it won't work. You've already made the decision to change. Think; think about why you continue to come back to the Hall. What do you need to change about your lifestyle? – Don't be afraid to ask for help. It shows courage and strength to ask for help. You can do it! Keep your head up, Lil' Bugga!

**she stole my heart with love
she stole it with all the intentions of love**

Black Majik and Kevin's Page

Tha Weight of Trust

Trust is an important thang in a relationship
Especially when in the beginning you only paving it
My point of writing this potion of emotion
of love for you is radiant
Like diamonds
and cash given to the eyes of my favorite girl
You engulf my world
Wit' those eyes that make me realize
you're my black pearl
My feelings for you I keep concealed too much
I'm lonely without your rosy touch
Actions speak louda than words I ain't shown enough
I also need ground on to stand
To show you I can be a worthy man
I'm not Jesus, I can't tread on water
But I'll complete dat obstacle like a motha raisin' two
sons and a daughter
The weight of trust exceeds a ton
Just like the years for being caught with a gun
I don't have the heart to fall false to lust
Because my feelings for you are so much
I'm unda a trance with the weight of trust
I also need ground on to stand
To show you I can be a worthy man
I'm not Jesus, I can't tread on water
But I'll complete dat obstacle like a motha raisin' two
sons and a daughter
The weight of trust exceeds a ton
Just like the years for being caught with a gun
I don't have the heart to fall false to lust
Because my feelings for you are so much
I'm unda a trance with the weight of trust

-Black Majik, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your flows are incredible, though your writing is sometimes illegible. We understand how important you think trust is and it's much more important than lust is. You are a smart person and we think that you'll go far in life if you put your poetry and rhyming in a book and always write!

What They See

Why is life prudent?
Ruthless
To a seed that's beggin' to breathe that
conceived to receive a college degree
A born prodigy
Infamous for trouble slangin' B and D
Not associating with needless technology
A chosen path, a destiny
People ignorant to my life —
like kids to chemistry
If my crimes are so serious, why don't they
remember me?
Don't even look me in the face; my papers is
enough evidence to punish me
They hinder what they see in a image they hate
to see change
they timid
'Cause I live my life vivid
Full of shhh while theirs is insipid
Pitiful
Feeling endless
Like a book with no periods just one sentence
These suckas got a PhD
That's why they follow me
Don't get stuck by my speed
Catch the morals in it, like mythology
Analogy
If you don't know what it means
Read up on it like Malcolm X's autobiography,
Hypocrisy
Is even done by the greatest
They busy lookin' for a difference only seein'
similarities
That's why they hate us
Invade us
With warrants searchin' our property
We're human beings
That's why it's ignorant tryin' to read us like
books of philosophy

-Black Majik, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Who is this "they" you are talking about? Are you talking about the system as a whole or just the certain judges and DA's that you've ran across? Remember, the best success is revenge so don't give them the satisfaction of coming back to the Hall again. Get your life together and show the system, your family, The Beat and yourself (most importantly) — that you can/you've changed.

Bad Ways of the World

Really, however your mother brings you up, whether she brings you up in a good way or a bad way, makes you into a good or bad person — people are born good. Because God made you good; but as you grow up in the world, you change.

But people just do the wrong things because they see other people doing it, and they think it is cool. That's what I think. Babies are born good, then they become bad by the influence of the people they are around — babies just do what they see, and learn to do what they're told.

Me, I was good and bad, 'cause I do good things most of the time. But sometimes I be hardheaded and think I know everything — when I don't know nothing!

-Kevin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Some of us meet that bad influence first in our own parents; others when we get old enough to do things on our own, if we choose friends that don't know right from wrong. Or when we're teens, and we think it's all about material things, no matter how we get them. Don't be so hardheaded; get free and stay free.

Who Pays Attention?

If you had something to say to someone, the only ones who will listen to you will be you, your mother, grandmother, and God. If people don't want to listen to you, they don't have to — 'cause there are a lot of people that have something to say to everybody.

Me, I would feel bad when I wanted to be listened to and no one will pay any attention to me. But I can't make people do what they don't want to do. And I wouldn't want somebody to make me do something I don't want to do — 'cause that is wrong.

-Kevin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What happened to friendship? The game turns everyone into players, even friends? Or, everyone has to sound so cool all the time, even with friends? We notice no men on your list of people you can talk to — why? As for doing only what you want — if, for example, you don't want to wake up for school, is your mother wrong to wake you?

Shadow's Page

Teenagers Of Today

Why can't we plant the seed
For peace to start, that's what we need,
But the world is full of greed
And no one wants to help someone
They don't know, to help 'em have fun,
But they're the one
That shuts us down
And makes us frown
'Cause they think they wear a crown
And think they rule over us
'Cause we like to cuss
And like to do drugs,
But we just need some hugs
And for someone to show us we aren't bugs
In society today
Just 'cause we like to say
Bump it a whole bunch
And eat a lot of lunch
'Cause we get so high
We think we can fly,
But if, us, teens
Knew what it means
To be a menace to society
We wouldn't do what we do
To be looked down on by you.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are getting better with each piece. We can't wait for your release so that you can find peace. Hint, it's not in the streets. If you continue to get high every day, it will only hurt you in every possible way. Keep writing and never give up the fight.

You Never Do Anything Positive

Why is the sky blue
And why is it that you
Never have anything positive to say,
And negative words come out your mouth
everyday?
Why don't you keep your comments to yourself
And act like a doll up on the shelf
And stand there and look good
'Cause you know that's all you could
Without putting someone in a pit
Just 'cause you think you're the man
Just 'cause you are older
Doesn't mean you're bolder
Than me
I want you to see
That age ain't nothin' but a number
And you could be dumber
And I can make you go numb
From making you feel dumb
And make you crumble
Like a dirt wall that has fumbled
And I'll make you stumble
Over the air
'Cause you like to stare
At me like I'm here for you to torment
I am not here for your entertainment!

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We like how you stand up for yourself in this piece. You're right — you are not a victim. You are only a victim if you allow them to victimize you. Think of yourself as a survivor, a strong young man who will prevail regardless of the situations he's faced with. The haters will only make you stronger. Bump them! You go Shadow!

I Know You Hear Me?

Give me a break
I know you're fake
'Cause your personality shows
Like words on this paper, just flows
I am human, too
And I don't have to prove it to you
And I can see through
Your childish attitude
'Cause you're so rude
Like a book, I can read you
And I know you feel it too
'Cause you keep acting like a kid
Like you always did
Well, I'm fed up with it
In here, I sit
Knowing your deepest fears
And the surface, you personality nears
I ain't trippin' off of your actions
Even though they are like amplifications
I can ready you loud and clear
And I know you can hear
Me, as I spill this ink
I like to make you think
I'm not going to say
Who this is about in any way
I'll just keep reading away!

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad that you are saying how you feel in a mature manner. Now, what you think and what you do should be two different things. Don't jeopardize your freedom for someone's childish and selfish ways. Live and learn and move on...

Hate

Why does the world spin
And why is there so much sin
In the world today?
I mean, hey
Why can't we change our ways?
We can make a difference anytime
All we need is a little time
To tell everyone, but they have to try
And 'cause they don't, we're going to die
With a lot of regret on our mind
'Cause we did not find
The time to help someone we didn't know
To help the happiness flow
You can make a difference
For instance
Telling someone, "I like your hat,"
But instead you tell 'em, "You're hella fat,"
And that destroys them inside,
But you can't see it on the outside
'Cause feelings only show to a certain extent
And you don't know until they are sent
To your house and kill you physically
'Cause you killed 'em mentally
And finally
We need to change society today
In every way
'Cause hateful words is all we say.

-Shadow, 150-Crew

From The Beat: You're right. Words hurt more than physical pain and could cause people to go nuts on the next person. Here's another spin on this, sometimes when people think you're "different", "strange" or whatever — they communicate that to you by being vulgar or mean. It's 'cause they don't know what else to say and really they just find you "interesting."

Shadow's Page

This, I Don't Like; It's Not Me

I don't know what to do anymore
I feel lower than the floor
Because people don't know me on the inside
And they judge me on the outside
What I look like or how I act
People don't know me, in fact
For all they know, I could be crazy
And flip on them for what they say
I wish people didn't hate today
Then, I wouldn't have turned out like I am
Thinkin' about leavin' my fam'
And stuff like that 'cause it's not who I am
I don't like thinking this way
And people don't hear me when I say
I am not gay
They don't care as long as they're havin' fun,
But I am the one
That feels the pain,
But they don't care — as long as they reign.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are really letting people get under your skin. Why? Why do you constantly allow folks to get to you? You are stronger than that. You are smarter than that. Ignore them; do not acknowledge their presence or comments and eventually they will go away.

they don't care — as long as they reign

Why Am I Your Favorite Game?

I don't know what to do
I'm fed up with you
Always calling me names
Making me one of your infinite games
That just keeps getting easier
All you do is keep making me queasier
I can't take it anymore
Calling me gay and this and that
I don't know what to do
Staff telling me to ignore it
But when I do, it just worsens it
Digging an even deeper pit
I have a ladder to get out
But people keep pushing me about
I don't know how to do this
It all makes me pissed
And I wanna ball up my fist
But I can't 'cause I need to get through
This crap that eats me away
Pretty soon, there will be no more
And my arms are hella sore.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Shadow, it hurts when others talk shhh and call us names. But you should recognize that the people that are calling you all these names, they are also in a lot of pain. You need to be stronger than them. Making fun of you shows their weakness. They need to pick on someone that appears weaker, in order to make themselves feel good. You can't allow this to happen – or at least don't allow it to bother you. Yeah, it hurts. But when you understand it from this perspective you will realize that they are the weak ones, and instead of hatred towards them you should feel pity.

Is Life Trying?

In this monotonous age,
I try to fill up a page
To tell you how I feel
And to let you know life's deal
For me, as I lie in my bed,
I sometimes wish I were dead
As these pictures fill my head
I am feeling constant dread
I start to cry 'cause they confuse me,
But I can see
What life was in store for me,
And that is constant pain....

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Life doesn't have to be constant pain... We know sometime life can be torturous but in the end, things get better. How can you make the best of what you have?

If I Could Have One Thing

If I could have anything in the world, real or make believe, I would have to say a talking cat 'cause I love cats and it would give me something to talk to, and I could have a pet to interact with 'cause there isn't really anyone that I can call my friend.

Ok, very few, but this cat would be my friend no matter what. It would love me for me and not what I dress like, or the way I wear my hair, or 'cause I have piercings. It would love the spirit inside me.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like what you really want is a person to love you without judging you. In due time, you will get what you deserve and others will get what they deserve as well. Much love. PS, we love the spirit inside you.

Pain Equals Pain

I don't know why people hate
It's going to make their fate
When they die
They're going to ask why
Did they hate on me
'Cause then they'll see
All the pain they caused me
They're going to feel it times ten
Why can't they act like men?
And treat me with the same respect
As I treat them
I know I'm not perfect,
But neither are they,
But I want to say
We need to break the chain of violence
That is the main problem in society today.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In the afterlife, we all shall pay for the mistake we make today. So from now until then, you just keep being yourself. Don't trip off everyone else 'cause that's just bad for your health.

We need to break the chain of violence That is the main problem in society today.

Shadow's Page

Downtown Hayward

When I was on the outs
I was free to roam about
I used to go downtown
With my friends to sit down
In the grass in the checkerboard park
We used to stay there till after dark
Playing hacky-sack
And smoke a whole pack
Then go bum stoges from the drunks
That say we are a bunch of punks
Then panhandle for a sack
And maybe jack a few bottles from the back
Of Albertson's grocery store
And get so drunk and high,
we were stuck to the floor
Sometimes, we would jack a box of Triple C's
And jump around like robo fleas.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes memories make us laugh; other times they make us cry. Some memories we want to forget and others cause our faces to get wet. But keep in mind there are new memories to make, so once you gain your freedom, maintain it and never again put it at stake.

I want to open my own shop so people can stop by for a piercing or a tattoo

I Am Looking Forward

I am looking forward to life
Living with my wife
And the plans I have planned
I wonder where I'll stand
In five years from now
I think I want to raise some cows
So I can be a shroom farmer
I want to open my own shop
So people can stop by for a piercing or a tattoo
When they want to
I want to be known
For my own
Skills in piercing art
I want to fly like a dart
Into an unknown land
Like Japan
I hope my best friend Tiffany
Won't walk out on me
Before we open our own shop
I hope I don't stop
And re-think my plans
'Cause I want my own fans.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice piece. We hope that you follow your dreams. They're not as far away as they seem. Just put your mind to it and eventually you can do it. Trust in yourself and you eventually shall find. A way to freedom and peace of mind.

Today Is The Day

Today
I became happy in a new way
'Cause the DA had to say
"We are dropping Case 1"
That completely stunned me
'Cause now I maybe transferred from here
And I no longer have to fear
Going to trial
So they can file
Me as an adult
'Cause it wasn't my fault.
Word To The Wise:
"Let the paper express what you cannot on any subject!"

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We are happy for you too. Now if you get released, how are you going to treat your freedom differently? Hint, hint... respect it.

Absent Me

I am in a far away place
You can't reach me
I'm in space
The only way
You can snap me out of it today
Is to be a good, little boy
But most of the time, that don't work
Oh joy, I feel so good in this state
I can't feel any hate
Or the pain
And I feel happy
'Cause there is no crappy
Negativity entering my bubble
And I feel no trouble
'Cause you can't bother me
In this state
See, this is the only place
I don't feel like a disgrace
'Cause I'm at a pretty place
Where the flowers grow
And I don't ever wanna come back,
So let me enjoy this state
Where there is no such thing as hate!

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This state of mind (we had to delete what you were talking about) is no good for your health. You have to find some other escape, another way to feel joy. Can you?

A Page

When no one listens to me,
I write.
My mom always told me, "Paper doesn't have feelings.
It's the feelings you put on the paper,"
so I like to write
'cause no one will listen to me,
so I express myself and my feelings on the page
for it to talk to whoever
for me.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your mother is a wise woman. When you get out, how can you thank her for her words of wisdom?

Sad Girl and Lil' Mama Hanna's Page

A Better Tomorrow

I try to look to a better tomorrow,
But all I can see is sorrow
I try to look on the brighter side
But life is a roller coaster ride

I try to put the past behind me
But I can't escape what I used to be
I can't escape all the drugs
And I can't stop lovin' the thugs

I want a better life
I want to grow to be a good wife
I just want my family to be proud
I want my mom to cheer for me out loud

When I look back, is this what I want to see?
I want the world to know there's a better me
I want to prove them all wrong
To show them I can live and go on strong

So I show no fear
And I'll never shed a tear
And I'll never feel sorrow
Because I know I'll have a better tomorrow.

-Sad Girl, San Mateo

From The Beat: It takes a lot of strength to come through the storms and see the sunshine, and this poem leaves us with the feeling that you're resolved to turn yourself around. What will it take to escape the drugs? What sacrifices are you willing to make to prove to yourself that you will live and go on strong? It's okay — sometimes even necessary — to show fear, to shed tears, even to feel sorrow while still striving for a better tomorrow.

Until The Day I Die . . .

I always thought that you would be there
To always show how much you care
You asked me if I was down to ride
And I told you I would never leave your side

When I look back I see lots of tears
But we had good times in those years
I would have given everything to you
And you said you would too

I still remember that day
I told you not you to go, but it didn't matter what I say
You said it was for your pride
And I told you I would never leave your side

I still remember the last thing you said
You told me you loved me and then you were dead
I'll never love another, that's no lie
Because I'll love you till the day I die . . .
RIP Victor

-Sad Girl, San Mateo

From The Beat: It's so tragic that so many young people are dying. We'd give anything to ask him whether his "pride" was worth it, whether he'd learned anything about what really matters — but it's too late. How many deaths will it take before people realize how hollow the word pride is in this context? There are plenty of people throughout history who have died for worthwhile causes — pride in a color or a false "cause" insults their deaths. We're sorry you lost your friend; we're sorry a family has lost their child. How can you live to take advantage of all the opportunities that Victor never had a chance to see?

I Look Forward

I look forward to my release which is coming up real soon, and it's about to be a wrap! When I get out of this place, I'm finna go eighteen on them — I ain't finna be stopped!

I'm about to be untouchable. I look forward to wearing my new Jordans, looking stubby on them J-cat females, doing dodo the fool. I look forward to sleeping in my cozy bed with my Sponge Bob covers and listening to KBLX as I fall asleep.

I also look forward to going to school, gettin' that good degree in Child Psychology and being somebody! That's what I look forward to. RIP Jeremee

-Lil' Mama Hanna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can already see you free, shining with an inner light as you walk down the street. You've been waiting for the day to come, so don't throw it away going dumb on fools — just remember what you've learned and use knowledge as a tool. Keep your eyes on the prize, and stay positive outside. Then drop us line to let us know you're doing fine.

I'm Invisible To You

do you really care
do you really care when i talk
what i say what i feel
nobody cares not really
i hope you can heal me
with some empathy
for my sympathy
maybe i'm invisible to you
do you even think of me
or you just see me
as a hopeless person
you're not the person i thought
you were or you would care
r i p lil jeremee

-Lil' Mama Hanna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Whether this poem is addressed to a specific individual or the reader of the poem, it is at once an indictment of indifference and a passionate plea for help. Though you may sometimes feel hopeless, we are sure that you are not without hope — we've watched you grow and we know — you're healing! Even when you're not feeling it.

I also look forward to going to school

Peewizzle's Page

Looking Forward To Life

I'm looking forward to life. Hopefully I can have one when I get out of here, even if it's in my group home in Modesto.

I want to be a regular kid again; go to school and be on a basketball team, I want to go to dances and do just what a kid in high school would do. But it's kinda hard to do that in Redwood City with all the negativity. But I really look forward to is seeing the look on my mother's face when I graduate.

I'm tired of always seeing my mother in tears. I'm tired of seeing another homie down 'cause the gun. I'm tired of going up to the casket to see my patna for the last time. I'm tired of this life.

I wanna change more. I want to walk out this door with a different mentality. I know more than I need to know but I still support my brain for being able to take in knowledge many people can't even handle, but I hope I learn before it's too late.

(Dedicated to Chente, who didn't learn before it was too late. RIP.)

-Peewizzle, San Mateo

From The Beat: You have so much life in you — so much intelligence building up, so much energy — and it's so hard to see you keep returning to the Hall. We hope that you learn from Chente's example and take advantage of the opportunities you're going to be presented with. How are you going to start living life in a way that doesn't lead to sadness? What will it take to leave the life of negativity? Is it possible for you to leave Redwood City, even if only for a few years? Is your mother able to move so that you can have a better chance at acting on all the knowledge you're taking in? If you go back to Redwood City, what will it take to steer clear of the violence that's bringing so many down? Enjoy school, enjoy the dances, share the joy with your mom when you graduate — that's living the good life.

Locked Down

I'm locked down in the same place
Only with a slower pace
Now there is no race
And the only way I'll get out is if I never catch a case
But I did to it was said as I lay in my bed
Thoughts running through my head
Feelings that were never said
Dreams that were never led
Still remain deep in my mind
Always changing a thought to another thought
There is no way I could have fought my brain
When it taught me how to do crimes
When it made me go crazy while doing my time
When it made me feel pain
'Cause all of the lies were all told the same
When I had you on the brain
And I couldn't maintain
To hold back these feelings that came
and struck my heart
Tears shed me apart
And I'm still stuck trying to mend my lonely heart

-Peewizzle, San Mateo

From The Beat: What does it take to mend a lonely heart? How can you pick up the pieces of the shattered dreams, broken by catching a case and losing a love, and start to build a new set of dreams? Now that you know how to commit crimes, how can learn to think through to the consequences of the crimes you commit? Can the pain you feel now, locked up again in the Hall, be enough to motivate you to stay up and out and free for good?

The same
shhh is being said
The same life
is being led
To a place with no end
A journey that
never ends

A Butterfly With Broken Wings

I'm a butterfly with broken wings
Still trying to fly into the sky
But I get stuck into the night while the darkness takes over
Now I have no shoulder to cry on
And still I look upon my peers for answers
To questions that remain unsaid
But instead I get puzzles and mazes in my mind
Of how I'm going to spend my time
As these tears still fall from my lonely eyes
I try and make you realize
That I'm for real and not a lie
Don't judge me by my life
'Cause all you see is the struggle
If you were to look up struggle in my book
The definition would be life
And if you were to look up life
The definition would be struggle
The same shhh is being said
The same life is being led
To a place with no end
A journey that never ends
And there is no me and there is no you
I thought you knew
RIP Regina (July 26, 2004); RIP Chente (April 17, 2004)

-Peewizzle, San Mateo

From The Beat: We hope that life can become more than struggle, or that in the struggle that is life you find a purpose, even joy. We feel that you're for real — we know your intentions, we see the potential that you have to make your life more than what it is. The challenge is turning that potential into reality. How can your never-ending journey take a turn for the better, towards a place that's light instead of dark?

I want to be a regular kid again; go to school and be on a basketball team, I want to go to dances and do just what a kid in high school would do.

Abbas and Lil' Tay's Page

Can You Dance?

i can't wait to sleep
to dream of being free
i can't wait to sleep
to dream of being me
life seems so unreal
just to sit at home
to not have someone screaming
while you're talking on the phone
or to wake up in the morning
and give your mom a kiss
man i hate these people
they took away my bliss
sometimes i pray to god
and often ask him why
but the answer is in front of me
because i am still alive
there is no turning back
no butterfly effect
my past is etched in stone
my future i must protect
so here i be
it's my second chance
life is a tango
but i know i can dance
so tie up your shoes
and step to your feet
life's at the door
just open and see

-Lil' Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a wonderful rhyme, that sets thoughts dancing in our minds. But you need to know which dances to sit out, and which dances to build your life about. Don't go back to occupations that led you to incarceration, and you will get your bliss. Don't hate on that, just take care of this.

Express Yourself

Most of the time, if I have something to say, I say it. I hope people listen to what I say, but if they don't — they're the ones losing out on knowledge.

My family always listens to my problems or concerns. I usually try to give advice or state my concern about a certain topic. I learned that it is not healthy to bury your thought inside of you. So, instead of doing that, I just express my opinion.

I feel depressed when people don't want to hear me out and give me a chance to talk. For people who don't have anyone who will listen to them, I would tell them to write in a journal. Also talk to God, because He always listens.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Coming from you, we agree that those who don't hear you out, are missing out on knowledge. Thank you for expressing your opinions in The Beat; they are always thoughtful, honest and compassionate. And well worth reading!

Destiny and Choice

I think people's destinies are set by God before they are born.

I also believe people have choices in life, if they want to do good or if they want to do bad — but God knows about what decisions you'll make before you even make them. I believe in destiny.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have been destined to learn from your mistakes and share those lessons with others. Thanks. Peace.

i look forward

to being the man
my mom wants

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A good son is a mother's happiness.

I learned that it is not healthy to bury your thought inside of you

the system swallowed me up

Just Fishing

they swallowed me up
like bait on a line
they were just fishing
for a life that was mine
i put myself out there
set up for a fall
i never saw it coming
not even a little
not at all
the process was slow
the time made me waver
the system swallowed me up
and shat me out nine days later

-Lil' Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: But when you raised your sights, you saw a spiritual net, beyond the understanding of cops and feds; a net more powerful than laws of wrong and right — a heavenly net that restored your sight and set you back in the light.

Meditative Moment

take a breath
it might be your last
slow down your car
you're driving too fast
'cause if you don't listen
and try to push your luck
just keep on ignoring
and soon you'll be stuck
you think you're okay
and you won't get caught
that's when it happens
now look what you got
trapped in a cell
numb without feeling
you don't want to live
but your heart keeps on beating
so why did it happen
because you broke the law
no that can't be it
that's not it at all
the lord has just saved you
from what you'll never know
he gave you a chance
so show him you know

-Lil' Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Go on with your preaching, for you are truly teaching! First you lay down the lesson for all to see, then raise it to a higher level of truth and spirituality! We hope our readers can follow your meaning, 'cause the lessons you're teaching will spare them some grieving. You truly talk the talk, now walk that walk!

Howard and Young Holla's Page

Listen To Me!

Nobody will listen, because I'm a resident, as they call it in Camp; a detainee, ward of Alameda County. They say they can't take the word of a criminal. What type of stuff is that?

If somebody would stop and listen to me once in a while, maybe they will either learn something and/or get help in life. People who don't listen to me, end up either falling or wishing they did listen.

The Beat listens to me when I have something to say, all the time! And they even give feedback, too. I can always talk or write to my patna, Boobie, and tell him about anything! And I can also tell my female friends about what I'm going through.

My family will always be there for me, especially when I have something to say about what's on my chest — because it gets to a point when nobody is listening to me, and I explode! I be like, "Shut the f— up and listen!"

Then that person starts listening to me, but I hate for it to get to that point. I really think it's a shame, what I have to do to get people to listen. But, sometimes, it's for their own good.

-Howard, 150 Crew

From The Beat: No question but that you have wisdom to share; in our pages we feel your experience, strength and hope. But now, that temper! Because you're not only intelligent, but big, and accustomed to smashing — controlling that temper remains an ongoing issue for you. We see you making marked progress in this regard, and congratulate you!

Not Their Fault

When people act the way they act, it's mostly their parents' fault. Either their parents taught them to act like that, or showed them how by their own actions.

Some people act how they act, to get attention. They like getting attention and they want somebody to give it to them. I call them type of people: attention cravers! They like both positive and negative attention. When they don't get positive attention, they will settle for negative attention!

I feel sorry for those type of people, because they will always — always! — get hurt. Because when people are always throwing negative stuff at you, and you are an attention-craver, you will turn out negative!

When you're a positive person, you don't get affected by negative things. It may hurt you, but since your positive — you'll always stay on top. Peace out, Beat!

A shout out to all in the Hall. Y'all keep y'all heads up! And remember, if you want to change — you can change.

-Howard, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Have you thought about pursuing a degree in psychology? You've got a knack for it. We don't know if "attention cravers" always turn out negative, but they sure do set themselves up to fail! Meanwhile, match your positive attitude up with positive pursuits, Howard, and you'll go far!

People Have Their Own Problems

Won't nobody listen, 'cause people have their own problems. I could see if you was going through the same thing I was going through, but I doubt that very seriously — 'cause it will probably be once in a lifetime I find somebody going through the same struggle I went through.

-Young Holla, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Struggles aren't as different as you think. Look for the similarities not the differences, and you can learn a lot from the next person's experiences.

Born To Be Wild

born to be wild i was known as a hustla
sold nothin' but purple and stunnas
now people talkin' i'm a menace to society
known for poppin' pills sellin' purple by variety
i was hella wild it was nights i didn't eat
i then went from coppin' bubble' then coppin' keys
the question is am i good or am i bad
half of my heart is good and half of my heart is bad
half of my heart is 'hood and half of my heart is glad
to be who i am today good or bad anyway
all i try to do is recop a couple of pounds a day
you should feel me 'cause i do bad to do good
i'm tryin' to be out if i had a chance i would
try to do good and support my family
but i'll still do bad 'cause it happens randomly

-Young Holla, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Selling weed does you no good, 'cause it traps you in a way of living in the 'hood that puts you under lock and key, just as you say — randomly! But certainly! Far from supporting your family, it robs them of your presence and they're visiting you in prisons. No, selling weed does you bad, leaves you and your loved ones sad. But everyone will be feeling good, if you start doing what you should!

I Look Forward To ...

I look forward to going home while I'm up at Camp.

And I also look forward to getting mail from Boobie, because I need to stay up on how he's doing in the Hall; and what they're trying to do with him, when and where he'll be placed.

I also look forward to talking to my females on the phone and kickin' it with them.

I also enjoy going to church and praising God. To all the people out there who think that knowing God and going to church is for wimps and wussies, I will tell you, "I beg to differ." I will praise God until I die, because nobody can get me to heaven but God. Peace out, Beat.

-Howard, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Keep praising God, and show your praise with actions not just words, ya heard! 'Cause an act of God is God's will done, here on earth as it is in heaven.

the question is am i good
or am i bad
half of my heart is good
and half of my heart is bad

"I Look Forward To . . ."

Out Of CYA

I look forward to getting out of CYA.

-Anthony

From The Beat: What will be the first thing you do when you get out? Then again, what do you hope to accomplish in CYA?

Outs

I look forward to bein' on the outs.
I look forward to goin' to the pad and not runnin' from whatever Group Home they put me at!
I look forward to seein' my homies and my family.
I look forward to goin' to kick it with some females, feel me!
I look forward to goin' to my 'hood and drinkin'!
I look forward to seein' my bro' when he gets out the "Y."
I look forward to seein' my dad and uncles when they get out the pen! I'm out!

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: Since everything you're looking forward to is on the outs, then why can't you keep your butt out there?

Seeing My Family

The only thing that I am looking forward to is to see myself get out then go see my family. I was looking forward to gettin' out and seeing my family and my girl, but I think God has different plans for me, so I won't get to see that lyin' female at all.

I hope I won't get to see her again, but it's all good 'cause she taught me a lot about a girl. She taught me to never trust a girl ever again in my life 'cause they're all the same, but let me get back to the subject 'cause I just look forward to spending time with my family and make up for all the time we missed together.

That's what I look forward to.

-Lil' Carlos

From The Beat: Hold on there young Carlos — not all females are the same. You may have had a few, but you ain't had 'em all. PS, don't let one bad experience with love stop you from loving again.

I Just Can't Wait to Be Free

What do I look forward to? Well, right now I look forward to the day I leave this cesspool. I look forward to going to my placement at ROP, so I can get my time started and then I can get out and be with my family and friends.

I'm looking forward to my home passes, so I can kick it with my family and homies. I can't wait to get out and be with my lady! I'm looking forward to going back to regular school, so I can kick it at school and go to the football games and smoke some trees (if I'm off of probation).

Going to kick back with the homies! Looking forward to the days when I ain't got to stress no more off money! I can't wait to be legit with a job! I can't wait to be free, so I can be home!

I'm looking forward to them days that are ahead. Stay up, don't stress the small stuff.

-Crazy

From The Beat: We wonder if you know how much progress you've made, how much more mature you've become in your thinking! We know some of the others in the Hall are beginning to feel you when you talk about going legit so that when you get free you stay free — stress free! We wish you all the best at ROP. This dead time gets heavy on your shoulders, but stay strong. (And don't rush for trees, 'cause a clear mind will help keep you free.)

Look Forward to Home Visits

I look forward to going home and spending time with my family and friends, but especially my girlfriend, Melissa.

I need and want to see Melissa so bad, I can't wait till I get to Camp — and get my first home visit! Oooh! That will be the day! But until then, to all in the Hall, stay up.

-Adogg

From The Beat: Just do a cool program at Camp, and you'll have those home visits every week. Don't get dirties, don't get write-up's, answer your check-in calls, and come back on time.

Instead

i look forward to
the day i'll be
in college and working
for things i want
instead of stealing
or asking for them

-K

From The Beat: Don't wait till then to stop stealing, or you may never even get there.

Going to Camp

I look forward to going to Camp, so I can get my weekend pass — so I can see my family and my real ninjas that are doing what they have to do.

I look forward to seeing my lady friend that I haven't seen in a long time. So, you know I have a lot on my chest, so I'm glad she's there to hear the worst and the best.

-Moe Butter

From The Beat: Not everything you think you "have to do" is something that needs to be done, nor need it be done by you. Meanwhile, keep using The Beat to get stress off your chest.

I tend to stress out more and more. But I am working on that.

Lookin Forward

I look forward to...
Not coming back to the Hall
Becoming a rich black person
Getting along with people that's always negative
Getting myself a nice car and a nice lady
Not doing bad things
And showing leadership to my friends and family.

-Unknown

From The Beat: We look forward to that too. You can do it! Be a leader. Show your friends and family how beautiful life can be!

Three Months and I'm Out

I look forward to getting out of the Hall. I will be getting out of the Hall in three months. So I look forward to that, really!

Why I look forward to getting out, is because I will be eighteen in some months, and I will be in the Hall. And that's why I look forward.

In the Hall there is time to look at the things you are doing on the outs, and the things you are going to do when you get out of the Hall, like going back to school and getting your life together and getting a job — and stop selling drugs!

To all the people in the Hall — do the right thing and live right!

-Lil' Vick

From The Beat: Your plans look solid. Just don't get discouraged if you don't get the first job you apply for, or the first ten, or even twenty. Of course, it's discouraging to get rejected, but hang in there with a positive attitude — and you'll get that yes you're looking for. Just don't go back to selling drugs, a'ight?

The Road That Leads Me Home

I'm looking forward to going to my group home in San Francisco, and going to drug rehab'. I have to stay and follow my program for four to six months, or six to nine months, then I'm free — and either get to go home or go to my grandma's home in Vacaville!

-Krystie

From The Beat: Take it one day at time and just focus on doing the next right thing. Follow your program and take it all in, then before you know it — you'll be home again!

The Future

I look forward to getting out of this place in a few days. But it is hard because lil ninja's my age are going to try to test me before I get out and I don't want staff to beat my butt when I fight back. And I don't want to do the time for a fight so I have a problem and I don't know what to do.

Should I just fight to show I am not a punk or do the right thing and just let it go and not fight and go out like a punk. I think I am going to get let go in a couple of days so I think I would go with being a punk for a couple of days it won't hurt for long.

-Jacob

From The Beat: It's not about being a punk; it's about handling your business. What's harder to do -- to throw a punch back or to walk away? Which takes more courage? Besides, as you know punching back will just get you more time. Smart decision.

Looking Forward to Camp Sweeney

I've been looking forward to Camp Sweeney for over a month now, and I hardly know what my position on the list is now.

I think I'm number eighteen, or something like that. Hopefully, I'm fifteen or something even lower than that! But for every day that passes by, I tend to stress out more and more. But I am working on that.

-Yung Scooby

From The Beat: Expecting to go but having to wait, is hard on the nerves. It seems like time passes agonizingly slow. So, yeah, you have to work on not letting yourself get all stressed, over nothing really but a little bit of time.

To all the people in the Hall — do the right thing and live right!

"I Look Forward To . . ."

Look Forward to Putting My Past Behind Me

I look forward to going off to Camp whenever they call for me — so I can put my past behind me.

I was on the run for eleven months, not doing bad things out there but trying to do good and going to work — because I didn't want to come back to this place when they caught me up and thought they had me for another case like some guys that leave Camp then go do wrong, get caught up on the street, and wind up going to CYA.

So I thought by me going to work every day from nine to five, that if I ever did get caught, they would give me thirty days but then the judge would let me out.

-Bank

From The Beat: We congratulate you on getting a job and trying to do good while you were "on the run" for almost a year. The problem with being on the run is that sooner or later, you run out of time. Something always happens. But, because you did not catch another case, you're getting another shot at Camp. Coo'! But don't run this time, 'cause if you keep running, even without catching a new case, they'll put you where can't run — the Y.

Looking Forward to Seeing Family

I look forward to getting out — and going home, seeing the family! I've been looking forward to this for one hundred and twenty-three days, just sitting and waiting for them to say, "Gypsy, it is that time!"

When I get to get out, I will do my Camp program and then go home. I am looking forward to doing good and not doing no more robberies. I won't say I will not do no more crime, because that "might" be a lie. So, I say — I will do what I can to not get in no more trouble. And that is what I am looking forward to.

-The Gypsy

From The Beat: It's hard to say if your setting yourself up for a fall or not. It all depends on what you mean by "do what I can to not get in more trouble" — so what do you mean by that? What can you do? And who is this "I" — the same old Gypsy who keeps messing up and coming back? If not, how are you different?

From Here

i look forward to making it through the hall
i look forward to pimping my group home
i look forward to making it through the system
i look forward to getting off probation
i look forward to being free
i look forward to being with my family
i look forward to life
i look forward to living

-Lil' B

From The Beat: What does "living" mean to you? Can you describe what you expect or hope your life to be after you're free?

When I Get Out

I'm look forward to waking up every morning to thank God for another day. I'm looking forward to getting out here and getting my life straight. I'm looking forward to seeing my nephews and my niece when I get out.

I'm looking forward to getting back on the block to serving these knocks. I'm looking forward to the grape session when I get back.

-Elijah

From The Beat: Make up your mind — either you get your life straight or you get right back out there on the block. Ain't no half steppin' in the game.

I'm Looking Forward to My Release

I'm looking forward to my court date on October twelfth, 'cause that's when I'll get released! And I'm already going to be eighteen, 'cause my birthday is on October eighth.

The first thing I'm going to do, is go get with my dude, 'cause my dude is hella fine; and I love him. And I need to get my hair and nails done, and get my eyebrows waxed; and go pick up my cell phone from the police station.

And I'm gonna go get me some real food, 'cause I be hella hungry in here for real food! Ooooh, and as soon as I get out, I wanna smoke a Newport.

-Candi

From The Beat: It all sounded good, till you got to that 'Port. You survived without smoke, why go back and start? Oh well, if that's all you smoke, life won't get too crazy, okay? But we didn't hear any structured plans for a future of being free to stay. Congrats on your imminent release! Now plan how to stay free.

I am looking forward to doing good

My First Home Pass!

I look forward to getting my first home pass this weekend. I can't wait to see my family and loved ones — I miss them hella much!

It feels like I have not seen them in years, though it's only been three months. I'm also looking forward to pimpin' Camp and havin' a good life!

-Darryl

From The Beat: If you want a good life, you have to do more than "pimp" Camp, which we take to mean: don't make any changes in your thinking but do a good program so you can get back to what you were doing before you got caught up.

Looking Forward To...

I look forward to go to Camp and going on a home pass every weekend.
I look forward to being with my friends on my block.
I look forward to being with my mom and sisters and brothers.
I look forward to being a boss.
I look forward to getting some when I get out.
I look forward to getting high.
I look forward to being the biggest drug dealer in Oakland.
I look forward to being the king.
I look forward to being the best of the best.
I look forward to be a fire boy.

-Wg

From The Beat: Damn homie, you're doing too much! What you have to decide is what's more important to you — your family or your dreams of being a career drug dealer. Can you be the best at something else? 'Cause we think you're smart enough to know that drug dealing will only lead you to a jail cell or something worse.

Going Home One Day

I look forward to going home one day, because I've been waking up in this County for so long I forgot how freedom feels! Does it feel good? Is it fun to be out, or what? I just want to go home so bad, because I wanna know how it feels to be home again!

But I know that I'm not going home for another six or nine months, because this sorry judge just gave me another six-to-nine month program at Camp! And I just did six months at Camp, and I ain't trying to go back to Camp — because that place is not coo' when you wanna go home!

-Manpreet

From The Beat: If you did Camp, why are you back here? Did you run? If so, don't let being homesick trick you out of finishing a program that has some of your peers getting down on their knees to pray for another chance at doing right this time.

To The Block

I'm looking forward to going back to the block and smoking my grapes and sipping my Henn-dowg and doing other things with all the girls, plus selling my drugs.

-Lil ' Marcus

From The Beat: We appreciate the honesty but we hope you won't be engaging in the same activity that bought you to the Hall in the first place. Think about where all this is taking you. You can't do the same bull shhh and expect different results. Think about your next move and be sure that it's your best move.

I Look Forward To...

I look forward to going home to spend time with my boo. I miss my baby Ree, he is hella cute. All females don't mess with him.

-Aaniyah

From The Beat: We know everyone looks forward to going home, but think outside that cell, and ask yourself what do you look forward to in life for yourself?

I look forward to being the biggest drug dealer in Oakland.

Freedom

I look forward to freedom.

-Fireball

From The Beat: What does freedom mean to you?

The Release Day

I look forward to the day I'm going to get released. I can't wait till I'm released. First thing that I'm going to do is hug my mom till she tells me to get off.

Second thing is I'm going to thank God.

-Unknown

From The Beat: The day you're released will be a beautiful day. Don't come back!

"I Look Forward To . . ."

Looking Forward To...

Getting out being with my family
Waking up in my own room
Smoking a Newport
Being with my girl
And kickin' back with the homies
Just being able to smell the fresh air
Is something to look forward to

-Young Quis

From The Beat: This is sweet and simple, Young Quis, but sometimes simple says a whole lot. That fresh air is waiting for you to take it in and treasure it so that you don't have to come to places like this and dream about it.

I Look Forward To Hell

I look forward to going home
I look forward to rest my dome
I look forward to cease depression
By harnessin' the aggression to achieve the oppression
I look forward to face God when He judge
Because I can't stop myself from harborin' a grudge
I look forward to heaven and hell
'Cause man angel inside fire is where I dwell
I look forward to sex and drugs
'Cause I feel pain in my temple
It's like I'm fighting a holy war in the mental
But I can't tell
I hate life
So I'm destined to look forward to hell

-Rich

From The Beat: It's surprising to read this piece from you, Rich — we'd never guess at the turbulence you have going on inside based on the chill persona you have in our workshops. Where does all this rage come from? What is the reason that you hate life? Do you think that hating life means you're necessarily on the path to hell? We're concerned for you, and we also want you to tell us more.

I Look Forward To Partying

Smoking a blunt
Drinking a nice cold beer
Hanging out with my little brothers
Getting a job
Going to regular school
Wearing my own clothes
Eating real food
Smoking a cigarette
Chilling with real girls
Going to sleep every night warm and with a full stomach
Waking up every morning knowing that a day full of freedom is ahead of me.

-Gobe Dimes

From The Beat: We can appreciate your list of things you look forward to, but we hope your number one and number two desires don't interfere with those other two: getting a job and going to school!

What I Look Forward To

I look forward to getting my GED while I'm locked up.
I look forward to go kick back with my two families.
I look forward to face the time they wanna give me.
I look forward to get out some day.
I look forward to pick up some pisto when I get out to go wild.
I look forward to go back to Redwood City.
I look forward to kick back with all them firme hynas.
That's what I look forward to.

-Creepy

From The Beat: What do you look forward to doing with that GED? What if kicking it with one of your family leads to risks that will keep you away from your second family? Make no mistake — you will have to make the choice between your two families, and that choice will likely be linked to a choice to stay free and build on the positive on one hand, or leaving your 'hood behind for the Pen on the other.

Going Home

I look forward to going home. I am extremely bored and lonely here, ain't nobody to talk to. I want to be free and get out of this place. I really miss my mom. I want to talk to her.

I kinda feel betrayed by both my mom and dad because they told me they were going to visit me, but didn't. Nobody came to see me. Oh well, I won't let things like that get to me.

I want to go back to work and see all of my co-workers because I miss them. I'm excited because this is my last year of high school and I'm going to try to do really good.

-Mm

From The Beat: How will you stay free and avoid getting caught up again? Will you have the courage to sit down with your parents and ask them why they haven't visited? We wish you luck with school and with your transition back home. Don't just try to do really good; do really good.

Court Next Week

I look forward to my court date next week on Friday. I am so nervous. I hope I get to go to another group home. Hey it could happen.

I wish I could go back in time and take back the things I did, like a tape player, and rewind so I would not have to do this time in the hall. I hate this place. But I can't, so I might go to CYA for my actions.

Peace and one love.

-The Hockey Man

From The Beat: Yes, you might have to go to CYA for your actions. In fact, you might be there now. We think this would be just one more tragedy in your life, another burden to deal with in addition to the multiple illnesses you suffer from. None of us can rewind time, unfortunately, but we can try to let our past guide us to a better future. We are thinking about you, Hockey Man, and wishing you good luck.

Being Free

I look forward to getting released,
I look forward to being free
I look forward to getting out of here
and staying out there!
I look forward to getting my shhh together
and staying out of here forever!
I look forward to August 23, 2004
I'll be walking out of here
with my head held up high
and always knowing I did all my time!
To all my homies in here
keep ya head up!
To my girls in East Unit
be good and stay coo'.
Keep ya head up
and stay coo',
it will work out
Don't trip!

-Simply D

From The Beat: Though we'll be sad to not to see you in workshops, we're happy to see you walk out of the Hall as well — especially with the attitude that you'll be out forever. Now that you're so close, what do you think it'll take to stay on the outs?

Looking Forward

I am looking forward to getting out of Juvenile Hall so I can go back home and live my normal life and do my best and give out hope. When I go to court then I will go home and play with my brother and play Nintendo. Then I will be happy one more time.

-Jaime

From The Beat: What you are hoping for is so basic, so understandable – to be free. That time will come, Jaime, but then what will you do to keep your freedom? Will you sacrifice any of your old ways? Like what?

Looking Forward To A Lot

I look forward to a lot of things. First and foremost I look forward to going back to Redwood City and kicking it with the homies and family.

Second, I look forward to going to college and becoming a mechanic. I also look forward to going back to the park and playing some handball, winning my money. But most of all I look forward to kicking it with my two families and the females.

Much love to all, keep ya heads up and stay strong. Until next time pencil meets paper I'm out like this — late.

-Creeper

From The Beat: We'd love to see you go to college and become a mechanic, but your allegiance to one of your two "families" has you on a different path. Which way will you choose? Will it be possible to kick it with the homies and pursue an education and career? Keep it real, Creeper — you're facing a crossroads, and the choices you make will have lifelong consequences.

Happy Tears

I can't wait till I go home. I look forward to seeing my granny — seeing her with open arms, with happy tears. I want to cry too.

See, my granny always listens to me. She tries to understand where I'm coming from. She finds a way to be there 24-7. Although she may not be right there by my side right now, she still makes time to write me. She makes sure I never run out of grease, rubber bands or anything else I may ever need.

I ain't really got no more time.

-Baby Juvenile

From The Beat: It's funny that you end this piece by saying that you don't have any more time — best we remember, you said you were done long before the workshop ended. Your granny sounds wonderful, and it's clear that you appreciate the care she shows you. The thought of the two of you crying happy tears of reunion is beautiful. How will you get there from where you're at now?

Home Passes

What I look forward to is my six-hour home pass on Sunday from 2:30PM to 8:30PM. It was hard at first to come back here, but now it's getting easier because I only got four more weeks.

I'm looking forward to going home, but I'm gonna be put on house arrest and I have to do hecka stuff, but I ain't trippin' because I get off probation in nine months. I'm only 15. I will be 16 when I'm off probation.

I'm happy because people ain't getting off probation until they 18 or older, so I look forward to getting my life together.

-Megan

From The Beat: You sound like you're preparing yourself to return to the outs. How were you able to recognize that you have the chance to put your life back together? What's it going to take to start back down the right path?

My Release

Something I look forward to is my release. I look forward to this because not only does it give me back my freedom and gives me motivation to return to school with a passion, get myself more focused on sports, return to my family and get a job and prepare myself for my future.

The obvious reason I look forward to it is because it is unknown. But I'm not too upset mentally because I'm young and you'll eventually be released so until then I'm going to chill.

-J

From The Beat: Many people are afraid of the unknown — how are you able to embrace it as something to look forward to? How will you make sure that your preparations for the future don't hit on further snags that land you back in the Hall? We hope you stay on chill mode and get yourself back out with the quickness.

"I Look Forward To . . ."

Out Of The Ranch

I look forward to getting out of the Ranch as soon as possible. I also look forward to succeeding in life. These are some of the things I look forward to.

-Jr B4

From The Beat: Besides getting out of the Ranch, how will you know when you've succeeded in life? What other things are you looking forward to?

College Bound

I am looking forward to be leaving soon. I should be leaving on the twenty-sixth. I will be going home with probation. I am not coming back here. I will go back to school and play sports. I will get a better education and better grades. I am planning on going to college.

-Sean B1

From The Beat: Good for you, Sean. We know you can do whatever you set your mind to — and we applaud you for setting your mind to going to school, playing sports and going on to college. We also appreciate your determination not to come back here. Go for it.

Not Lookin' Forward To That Jury

I look forward to bein' down for a minute 'cause my case is bein' takin' to trial. Now I gotta go in front of a jury to see what they hollerin' 'bout 'cause I ain't wanna take a 20-year deal that they offered me.

I gotta admit that I'm a little nervous, but I really ain't scared 'cause everything happens for a reason. But the outcome could be me goin' home for good or to the pen for good. I say home for good 'cause I ain't comin' back if they let me out. And you probably get the idea why I said the pen for good.

Now, all I got with me is God. You know how the sayin' is, "hope for the best and expect for the worst." That's all I got to say to y'all. Until next time, be easy and ride yo' shhhh out. One love.

-Young Fatz B5

From The Beat: Well, Young Fatz, we sure hope that jury doesn't send you to the pen for longer than the 20 years you were offered. If you are with God and He is with you, then we guess you'll accept whatever happens. But we wonder what you think God wants from you. Have you been living up to your end of the bargain that God has for you? If not, how do you plan to change?

Looking Forward

I look forward to going to this group home in Vallejo, Ca. I really don't have a problem going to the group home because I used to live in Vallejo with my dad about seven years, on and off, so I'm used to living there. Got a lot of family from my dad's side, so I think I won't have any problems out there.

-J Money B1

From The Beat: Good luck in Vallejo, JM. Drop us a line about the program, and we'll put it in the Beat Without.

A Better Life

I'm looking forward to getting up out of here and trying to have a better life and not to come back up in here.

And I'm trying to stop smoking and have a better relationship with my family when I get the hell out of here. And trust me, you don't want to be in here, it's like hell.

-Ana GU

From The Beat: We trust you, and we hope others do, too. What do you think you can do to improve your relationship with your family?

Looking Forward

I look forward to getting out and going on with my life. I've been locked up eight months, and probably got three more months hopefully. I really don't have that much to say this week.

-Diddy B5

From The Beat: Well, if you don't have that much to say, we don't have that much to respond to... Only, we hope this has been a learning experience for you, the kind that will put you on a positive path for the future.

Looking Forward To Seeing You

I look forward to the day we see each other on the outs. Just thinkin' on what you would look like in some baby Phat denim jeans. The way you'll look wit' your hair all done. How you would look on your prettiest day.

I look forward to when we lock eyes under the stars and the moon and get that first kiss. And yes, love, I'm talkin' about you, because you know it's all about you!

-Noriega B5

From The Beat: We hope you get your wish, Noriega, and that the reality equals your fantasy...

Following The Rules

I look forward to getting out of YGC this time so I could start the program I was supposed to start two months ago, but I got arrested.

This program is strict, and when you make a little mistake, they lock you up. Last Tuesday I got released and decided to get drunk and high, the next day they tested me and then I went home. On Thursday I got arrested.

So this time when I get out, I'm going to show that I could do this program and follow the rules. My brother just finished the Marines Corps, and I want to kick it with him 'cause I haven't seen him in a while.

-Linard B2

From The Beat: Did you know the program you were in was so strict? If so, why did you break all of the rules? Did you think you wouldn't get caught? What are you going to do the next time the temptation to drink and get high strikes? We're glad to hear your brother's home, too. These days

Going Home

I look forward to going home, get ready for my baby, and staying out of here!

-Lil' Gues GU

From The Beat: Yes, we hope we don't see you in here again. Good luck

Getting Out Of Here

I look forward to getting out of this institution called Youth Guidance Center. The counselors in here don't guide us to do nothing. They wanna guide you back into this place so that they can get there 500 dollars a day for each detainee. Only certain people in here care about our future. I'm just ready to leave.

-Mac B4

From The Beat: Just to make it clear, the system may make $500/day off each detainee, but individual counselors do not. They get their salary whether there are ten people in the unit or 100. But if your point is that the system cares more about the money than about you, we can't disagree — even though we know lots of individual counselors who do care about you. Do you care about your future? If so, what are you going to do once you get out?

Glen Mills

I look forward to going to Glen Mills and getting my GED and getting this time over with and getting back to my block and do it real big with the homies and make big money.

-J-Stubb B2

From The Beat: Man, this is disappointing to read. Doing "it real big with the homies" will bring you back to the system, so going to Glen Mills will just have been a waste of your time and everyone else's. What a shame. We hope you change your mind.

The Future

I look forward to when I come back from Colorado. I look forward to being with my family and going to college.

When my man finishes his two-year program, I look forward to being in his arms for the first time.

-Alicia GU

From The Beat: We hope this all works out, Alicia. Start making it come true in Colorado.

To Sleep In My Own Bed

I look forward to going to court tomorrow and possibly hearing some good news, or maybe even hearing that I got tha right to release to tha house so I can sleep in my own bed that I haven't slept in about 26 months. I'm counting tha nine months I did before I ran from ROP, 'cause for tha three and one half months I was on tha run, I never went home. Moms wouldn't allow it.

I spent most my time in tha 'hood at tha dope house gettin' it 'cause that's how I had to feed myself. If I didn't hustle I didn't eat. I finally got wrapped after so many run -ins and outs with tha authority. I was then sent back to ROP for six months before I failed tha program.

I came back to tha hall and spent three months in B4. I turned 18 and then was sentenced back to tha Ranch 'cause I told the Judge I thought I could do a program up there. He gave me another chance at the Ranch after I ran from there when I was fifteen.

I just recently got terminated after spending six months at the Ranch. After being down fo' 16 months and passing almost all my GED tests except for my math one which I will pass if I go home tomorrow, I'll holla.

-Weasel B5

From The Beat: What can we say to you that we haven't already said, Weasel? You put down your recent history with the system as a journalist might write it, but where's the analysis? We can read the "what" and the "where" and the "when," but where is the "why"? You have so much potential, so much you could accomplish, but only by making that firm determination to do so. We see the wish to make that choice, but not the choice itself. If you were "the system," how would you deal with you?

My Girlfriend And Me

I look forward to my girlfriend because she does not smoke at all or drink, but I do and that's one of the reasons I'm in here. One day I lost all my smoke money in a dice game and that got me mad so I robbed someone.

-B Love B1

From The Beat: So, because you were foolish enough to hand your money to someone else, a stranger had to pay the price? When you write those words, how does it make you feel? What does the word "honor" mean to you, if anything? If things were a little different, and some other "loser" decided to take your money, what would you think? (We only mean "loser" in the sense of losing your money; but if you keep it up, you'll be a big-time loser in many other ways.)

Look Forward

I look forward to another day.
I look forward to seeing my family.
I look forward to seeing The Beat but the staff doesn't type all of my shhh.

-Diamond PG B4

From The Beat: Oh, yeah, Beat staff types everything except the shhh! Some of your writings seem to us to have no point, or even sometimes have meaning towards negativity. We are not saying that you can't write. You have some good writing, but it's just that much of the time, you just write for the sake of putting some words on paper. Let's say it again, quality will beat out quantity every time. Don't worry about writing five or ten pieces a night. Instead, spend a little time thinking about what you want to say, then say it in a way that we can understand, and in a way that teaches or explains.

"Born To Be Wild — Or Good?"

Born In A Different Family

I think if I was born in a different family, different neighborhood, different friends, if I was different, I think I wouldn't be here right now. I would probably be home or with my friends.

If I was raised in a good rich neighborhood I'd probably be good, spoiled, never get in trouble kind of kid. If my parents were rich and raised me to be square or something then I probably wouldn't be here right now.

I look forward to going home, back to my turf and do what I do and handle with my partners. But I'm gonna stay out of trouble. I look forward to kickin' it with my female. She could keep me out of trouble.

-Unknown

From The Beat: So what do you make of this judgment? Do you still have a chance, at a good life? Which lifestyle do you prefer? – In and out of the Hall? Or "Square". Better yet, think about your life, in the future – What kind of life do you want your kids to live?

About Being Wild

About being wild, I don't know. My little brother is wild and crazy in a way I can't explain. He do crazy stuff, like get a straight release and come back!

I be like, "What the freak! I wish I got one!" But one thing about him, he is a young hitter — and I love him with all my heart! But I just wish that he would pimp this shhh and just get out. That's what I'm about to do.

I'm getting out on EM for the first time in my life, and I'm going to pimp that shhh and stay at home with my family — forever! And maybe he will do the right thing, too. RIP Pep and Miny-More.

-Lil' Marv

From The Beat: You've got to divorce the street if you don't want to stay married to doing time, 'cause they go hand in hand, understand? If he wants to be a young hitter, it will cost him his freedom. You, too. So go beyond "pimping" the system, and divorce it all together — quit and go legit. Your brother will see.

Born to Be a Hogg

Where I'm from, I was born to be a hogg about mine. I ain't gone sugarcoat shhh 'cause all I do is keep it lit. 'Cause I'm a hogg in these streets 'cause ain't nothing gone make me or break me and that's on my momma.

The way I see it is everybody on their own and you choose your own path and right now mine's ain't nothing nice 'cause I don't care about nothing or nobody.

Really all I know is -- you get it how you live it. So if you got a problem with it all I can say is, love it or leave it or respect it or check it.

Straight up. Rest in peace Kenny Mack, Ronnie Easily and Tip Toe.

-Lil' Quan

From The Beat: Lil' Quan, we agree with you, everyone chooses their own path. You say that you don't care about nothing or nobody. Do you care about yourself? Do you care about your pain? Do you care about whether your gunna eat well, or not eat at all? Do you care about living a comfortable life – outside of jail? Well, if you really don't care about anything then you'll be fine continuing down the road you're on. It will be painful – but you don't care, right? If you do care about yourself, make decisions about your life that will help you. Decisions that will impact the things you care about. You are a smart guy, don't let your defensive attitude get the best of you – you're tougher than that. Be smart!

Born To Be Wild

I think I was born to be wild, 'cause every opportunity I get — I always am doing something crazy. I dunno know why, but I love to have fun, and I never can get enough of it. I dunno … I'm just hella crazy, I guess!

-Candi

From The Beat: If you were "born to be wild" — maybe you need help with your life style: AA? NA? You'll have more fun if you stay free, okay?

Most People

Most people are born to be good. Because when they were babies and don't know how to be bad when they're babies. And they get older, and depending on how they are brought up is how they will act.

So they became what they see, and most blacks see rough times, so they grow up with rough times, depending on the person.

People won't listen because they were never listened to. So, they don't know what to do with their selves.

If people listen more, maybe people can express their self and people would tell people what they feel, which makes people feel better.

-Nc

From The Beat: We're all for sharing feelings. You're doing a fine job in this piece. Why do you think people choose to express themselves violently? And how can we teach people that this is not the best way? What IS the best way to express yourself? How do YOU express yourself?

Born To Be Wild

It like this, right — I was born being wild. I'm'a be wild to my dying day. I am from Oakland, and I am all bad fo' ya.

Like juvie say, I get it from my mama. Ain't no shame in my game. My mom is a hitter. I am a hitter. My grandma is a undercover hitter. It just goes on. See, being wild is in my bloodline.

And nowadays, we all go dumb, you could say, as you call it. Me, I just say, I got thirty-one flavors. Feel me? But that's just how it is with that young savage in that Oakland life — if you ain't wild, you ain't gon' make it. So you know what that mean!

You either crack the smell and go thirty-one, yaddamean; or square to the fullest, yaunstandis! Look, I am a kaboose, you have that right. I am a stunta boy, that's right — and I go thirty-one, stuntin' and doin' the do, yaunstandis? Get at me when I hit wit' all that's good. Yaddamean? Yaunstandat?

-Bandits

From The Beat: We remember when you wrote about wanting to change, but you didn't make it; so after your release you came back, lost in the insanity of the street! Then you calmed down again, but you had lost faith in words of change. We're guessing you didn't even try when you got released that time. So now you're back — this time on max! Look where it's taking you, going wild! Trust, you don't want to go there.

Born Good Or Bad?

Are we born good or bad? No we're not born either good or bad. It's the way we get brought up, the people we kick it with!

I believe everyone is born neither good nor bad. They have no idea what personality they are going to have, good or bad, nor whether they will grow up to be good or bad. It just happens when it happens.

Sometimes one can't control whether one is good or bad. But I really can't tell you about anyone else really, because everyone is an individual — and either you're a sucka or a rida; good or bad. What can I say? Just keep it gangsta.

-Lil' Jose

From The Beat: Look around you in Camp, and think about who you saw in the Hall. How can you tell us that people who do good are suckers? With prisons full of gangsters, why would you recommend to Beat readers that they "keep it gangsta"? You know it's not ride or die, but — ride and die, ride to die.

Suppose To

Me personally, I don't believe in good or bad. If something happen, it happen for a reason, not because you are good or bad.

You can be good and still end up in here and you can be bad and stay on the outs. Things don't happen because you good or bad, they happen because they were suppose to.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: What do you mean? – Do you believe that there is a plan for all of us from the day we are born -- till the day we die? Don't you think things happen to us based on decisions that we make? If not, are we just puppets living out our pre-determined destinies?

Born to Be Me

in my eyes i was born to be me
whatever that may be
i guess i'll just let time tell
until i can clearly see
but me is me and nobody else
so to all you haters stay off my back
'cause y'all bad for my health

-Adogg

From The Beat: If you're serious about change, stay in touch with The Beat. Your rhymes speak! We come to Camp every week.

The Way It Is

people are the way they are
because they were either
raised that way
or they just chose to do it
so they made the wrong choice
but they can still make changes

-Beetoo

From The Beat: Just as you say, you can start to change today!

Wild Child

i was born to be wild
ever since i was a child
i liked doing dangerous things
i don't know why
it was just the thrill
of being on the edge
i think that's why
i'm in here today
i need to stop looking
for so much excitement
i need to calm down
and lay low

-Lil' B

From The Beat: Some get addicted to thrills, excitement, drama, and the adrenaline rush that comes with it; just as others become addicted to hop, crack, thizzle and crystal. Yes you need to calm down, before you destroy yourself like a misguided missile.

Born to Be Good and Bad

I was born to protect myself, respect myself, and to respect others and to hurt others if they hurt me.

But it may not be a good decision, and I know I can never kill an enemy because to an enemy I kill; there is another person who loved him or was related to him. I think that person will for sure be my enemy either way and to be good it's okay when you were born good or if you were born bad it's kind of sad tragedy. Flash! Mind is crashed immediately; personal imagination from others is constantly trash because others never had what they wanted.

Rich is mostly money and materialistic. Poor always wanted but we always asked for it all when we was little from momma and dad. Could it be that now in the future everyone is tired to ask and everyone is like a bad fruit affecting everyone else so all has turned bad?

-E-Wok

From The Beat: E-Wok, what else were you born to do? Can you show love? Compassion? Can you share? Do you make anyone happy? Does anyone make you happy? What do you enjoy in life? – Maybe these are all things that you were born to do. What do you think life is all about? Why are we here? What is our purpose? If we are all bad fruits – is there still a chance for the next generation to be sweeter?

"Born To Be Wild — Or Good?"

Look At Me

Personally, I think I was BORN TO BE WILD. Look at my life style. Look at all the crazy shhh I've been through. But am I gone yet? No.

I've been locked up for three years, but before I got locked up, look at all the stuff I did. But I'm still alive, yes. That's because I was BORN TO BE WILD, feel me.

-Roy B B5

From The Beat: We don't think you took this topic as seriously as it was meant, Roy. When you say you were born to be wild, do you mean that nothing in your life could have changed where you are today? If you had been born into a rich family living in the suburbs, would you be just as you are now? What makes a person the way they are, the genes they inherited from their parents, or the upbringing and environment they experienced growing up, or both?

Birth

This is a great topic because it directs us to answer straight. I think that people are born to survive and endure changes whether good or bad.

I hate to say if other people choices or decisions are good or bad because people may have to steal or bring another person pain to survive.

-Diamond PG B4

From The Beat: We appreciate the fact that you don't want to judge others. We, too, are reluctant to judge people whose lives we don't have to live. At the same time, we think there are very few examples — far fewer than people write in these pages — where causing others to feel pain is justified by the necessity to survive. Too often, we think that's just the easy way out, and an excuse for doing dirt.

How I Was Raised

I was not born good or bad, I was raised that way. I know that because I don't do bad stuff to people or to people I know because I was not raised like that. I was raised good, like to respect all elders.

-Bob Da Builder B4

From The Beat: If you were raised up to respect your elders, then what are you doing in the halls? By being in the halls, you are showing a sign of disrespect to those that care and love you. Do you agree?

I Was Born To Be Good

I was born to be good, be a football player and go to school, but it didn't happen because I was in the 'hood all my life. So now I think I was born to be a thug. This is shhh I been around all my life, but there's some people born to be wild but they turn out to be good. But it's really up to you.

-J-Stubb B2

From The Beat: Interesting ideas, J, but we feel like you're taking the easy way out in your life. If you believe you could be a football player and be in school, then you still can. It sounds like you're using growing up in the 'hood as an excuse not to do what you know you are capable of doing. As you say, you make your own choices. What seems better about being a thug than being an educated football player?

Born To Be Wild

I think people get the way they get because of something they experienced sometime in their life. They probably saw some sick shhh that made them go stupid.

I think that all people are born innocent, but once something tragic comes up, they might start having chronic dreams about it and reincarnate the situation.

-Thibo B2

From The Beat: Good reasoning, and we think you're too smart to keep wasting your time in the Hall. When are you going to start putting that good sense to use?

We're All Born Bad

Yes, I wondered how some people got the way they are because some people are born to be thugged out, killas, suckas, mutts and all that. It depends if people have a good family or bad family.

What I think is that I was born bad and others ain't like me. It's like this, if half of your family tree is good, then mostly you're good. But on the sick side, if the other side of your fam is bad, then you basically have both sides attached to you.

Some people start off being a good boy, like always with A's & B's then suddenly go bad with C's, D's and F's and four U's.

All babies are born good, at least some of them. Charles Manson started off as a Southern hillbilly redneck who did not know how to ride a bicycle without training wheels at age six. Mother Teresa had to be born very good.

Now me, I had to be born very, very bad, a vicious, criminal, assassin, killa. I was born bad. I very much think that through experience, their environment, and what they were taught. We are all born bad.

I look forward to getting out tomorrow August 18, 2004.

-Treze B1

From The Beat: You wrote both "all babies are born good," and "we are all born bad." How can both be true? Could it be that we're not born either good or bad, but learn how to live by how we see others living? Where do the ideas of "good" and "bad" come from? Are "bad" people all bad? Are "good" people all good? You have the beginnings of a lot of good ideas here, Treze, but we wish you would develop one or two of them more fully.

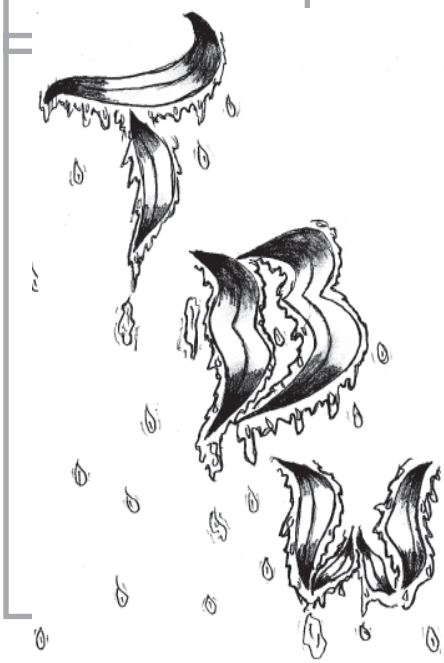
Born To Be Wild

Born to be wild from the day I was born. I guess everybody in they family got to have that "wild one" who goes around kickin' hell. I just guess I got it from my uncle. Shhh, it happens.

-Noriega B5

From The Beat: Well, if you were born to be the way you are, does that mean you cannot change? What makes people turn out the way they do?

I think that all people are born innocent



Born Bad?

They said I'm a bad ass, though it's been that way as long as I can remember. Though I don't know when it started, but I wasn't born that way for real, though that's real talk. But my mother was there; my father was there.

I don' know it, two g's pulls four in. I'm in YGC, but I'll get out. I won't be here for too long though. But I don't know, maybe I need to be here, get a check up from the neck up. I need to get my shhh together, though my mom's not on crack. I'm not a crack baby, I'm a weed baby though, gold teeth baby, though.

But I'm Lil' Ugly, and I'm out though one love Jack and Omega Boy's Club. I love y'all, for real though.

-Lil Ugly B2

From The Beat: What makes people say you're a bad-ass, and do you agree with them? What do you need to do to get your life together?

It Depends

I think people turn bad on their own, but I don't think anybody is born bad, because to me, when you're first born, you don't know anything, but it's what you learn and who you learn it from.

Because if you're always around bad people, you'll probably end up bad, and if you're always around good people, you'll probably end up doing good. It also depends on what you want for yourself. I don't believe people are born good or bad.

-Roderick B2

From The Beat: Good writing and thinking, Roderick. What bad choices or bad influences have you been around that brought you to the Hall?

if you're always around bad people, you'll probably end up bad, and if you're always around good people, you'll probably end up doing good.

"Why Won't Anyone Listen?"

I Could Care Less

To be honest, I could care less if someone don't want to listen to what I have to say, because that's their bad not mines. I say that because it truly don't matter if they listen or not, I'm still gon' say what I have to say, feel me.

After I say what I have to say, it determines on their actions what's goin' to happen after I say what I need to say, dig that with a big spoon, feel me. Lil bro' Nasty, keep yo' head up!

-Roy B B5

From The Beat: The problem with not caring if anyone listens to you or not is that it makes others not care too. The question we asked (but which you apparently didn't care to listen to) was whether there are things you have to say but no one to listen. Instead, you chose to let us know how tough you are, feel us?

Listen To Me

Why won't anyone listen to the lil' kid that feel he don't got no hope?
Why won't anyone listen to the kid locked up?
Why won't anyone listen to the kid that have no dad?
Why won't anyone listen to the kid that moms smoke that shhh? Why won't anyone listen to that kid that's just a kid having a kid? Why won't anyone listen when that kid gone through things?
Why wont anyone listen to the teens that coming up in today world?
I think if they do it wont be as much kids locked up as it is today.

-Lil Dakota B4

From The Beat: We wish people in authority would listen more to what the kids have to say, too. But listening is a two-way street like respect. To get it you have to give it. How much did you listen to the adults in your life trying to tell you about consequences? Whenever you feel nobody will listen, we hope you will pour it out in The Beat. We're always here to listen.

People Don't Listen

Why won't anyone listen? People don't listen to you because people lie, like people write certain things about you on a paper which is not true, like me,

I'm a good person but people don't know when you don't meet that person. And people don't like people because of where they live. They think ya involve in something when they don't know shhh.

But when you meet that person and they are a good person people still think you're bad because of what the writer writes down on the paper, so I feel meet the person before judge them.

-Tyrelle B4

From The Beat: Everybody has lied once or twice, maybe even more in their life, but is that the result of why people don't listen? Did you listen to your parents when they told you not to do this or that? You're right that words left on a paper tell other people how and what to think, especially if they don't know the person or the situation first hand. That's why it's better that you put down your truth on the paper so that you don't let anyone else write your history.

Ninjas Don't Listen

Ninjas don't listen, and when they don't they have to suffer the consequences. Say for instance you tell some ninjas you don't like to mess wit' the wrong people so he don't get hurt, and he do the shhh anyway, and end up gettin' hurt or killed.

-O-Nasty B5

From The Beat: How much do you think you're facing what you're facing because you didn't listen? Are there things now you wished you'd listened to earlier? Like what?

No One To Talk To

When my big bra got killed, I didn't have anybody to talk to; everybody keep telling me, "It going to be all right." And I'm like, "How is it going to be all right and he never coming back?" So I had no one who to talk but his mother. RIP Scharod.

-Lil' Er B2

From The Beat: What can a person say when someone you love has been killed? Did talking to his mom help you? Did it help her?

I was going through it, but they kept coming up to me like, it's going to be ok.

They Listen To Me!

They don't listen because they think we are crooks or just 'cause they don't like us. When I'm talking, it goes through one ear and go out the other. Like when I'm asking a question. Some doesn't answer, but most do, and I feel that 'cause they hear what I'm saying.

They hear positive things I have to say, like getting a job, going to school, making dreams that are going to come true respecting myself and others. But the people that don't listen just wanna live in negative situations, and end up in these type of facilities that are not cool.

-Lil Ghost B4

From The Beat: Keep talking about those positive things, and people will listen. No one wants to listen to negative things, especially not the staff. Even if others don't listen, we do, so just talk to us.

They Don't Want To Listen

Man, it seems like people wit' higher power around this place don't want to listen. It's like I just don't exist to these people. So they just want to play around wit' me and tell me they don't know what they want to do wit' me. I tell the judge I'm a changed me, but she won't listen. So now I'm here stuck like chuck, 'cause nobody wants to listen.

-Noriega B5

From The Beat: We know there are some people who do want to listen to you, Noriega, even if those with the ultimate power over your future don't. Do you think this could be a two-way street? In other words, are you here at least partly because you didn't want to listen to things that people were telling you?

Thinking About That

Man, I was thinking about that today, and then you came in and it popped right up. But anyway, I was in here when one of my ninja's died. I was going through it, but they kept coming up to me like, it's going to be ok. How is it gon' be ok? They don't know how tight we was before he died. All they know is what they hear on the block or what people tell them, but they really don't know us.

-J-Stubb B2

From The Beat: We feel you, J-Stubb. Do you think folks should just keep quiet and let you talk when that sort of thing happens? What would you say if you someone suffering in the way you were?

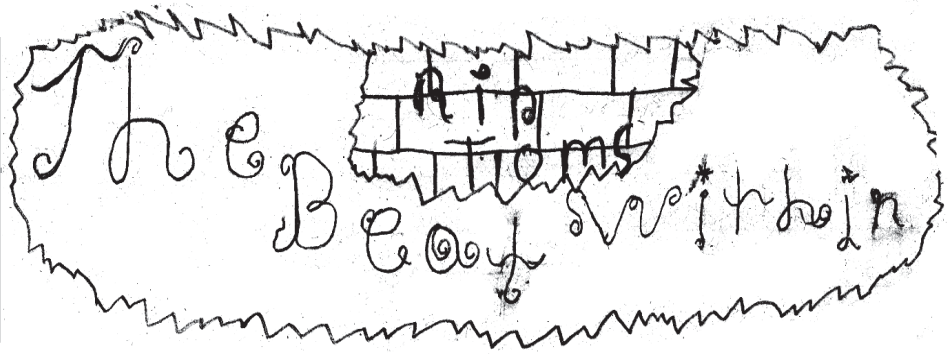
Nobody Will Listen

Why won't anyone listen to me? I want to do right, now. I want to go home. I hate being in this place. I am sittin' here mad because I can't see my family and the homies and see my girl.

RIP to all my homies.

-Ju Bang B1

From The Beat: We are always here to listen, Ju Bang. But listening is a two-way street. Those people you want to listen to you but don't — are you listening to them? What are they saying?

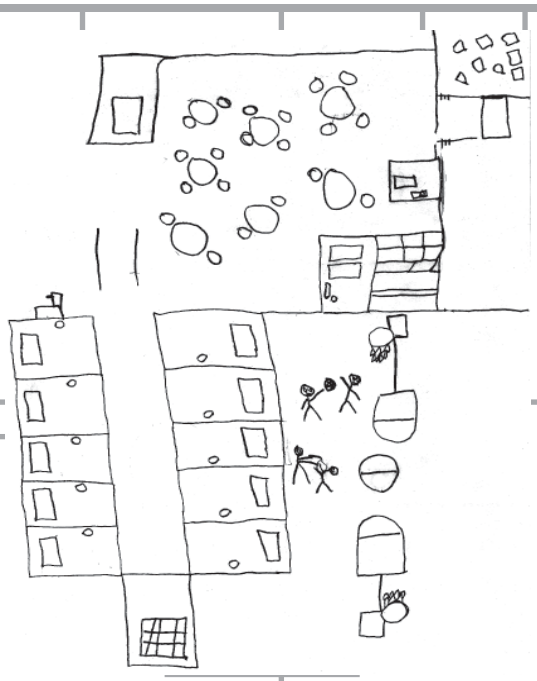


Life Is Real

My life is real. I'm tryin to get my folks out the jets.
Can't come outside without ya vest to protect ya chest
Got me locked up for some dumb mess
When I hit the block I'm gon bounce back quick
I'm a star starter, never sit on the bench
Reppin' so cats always hatin'

-No Name B1

From The Beat: Sounds to us like you're just one more follower (where are all these leaders and bosses we keep reading about?). To be honest, we're kinda tired of reading about reppin' the road by people that the road's done nothing for but wrap them up and put 'em in a box. Is it possible that you could have ended up living in a different spot, reppin' a different road? We wish you'd open your eyes to what is really real about your life, so you could lead it instead of follow it.



Abusing My Knowledge

I am in this jail, this chamber.
My mind clouded, my heart filled with anger.
I got all this knowledge but I don't know how to use it,
instead of putting it in use I abuse it.
My roars like an engine
but instead I stare in the eye of my friend Vincent.
As I look through the window I can feel the sun
but yet I'm trapped in this cell where I can't run.
Why won't anybody listen
I am calling out for this uncraved attention.
I still can hear the ringing in my ear
It's like a feeling that's piercing like a spear
So I end this poem in defeat and misery
and I feel like this jail is pimping me.

-St. Loui's B1

From The Beat: There are lines in this poem that make us want to understand more, much more. How is the jail pimping you? Didn't you give the system the power to do just that? (Are you pimping yourself?) What knowledge are you abusing — and why? What is the source of that anger that fills your heart, and what is underneath the anger? Is it pain? How can you use the knowledge of all this to your advantage instead of your disadvantage? If you didn't have skills, we wouldn't be asking you all these questions, but you do, so we are.

Corrupt

My life is corrupt
Maybe it's me
Doing my thang in the streets
Lead me to beef
But I can't stop
I'm in too deep
Now it's 2-00-4
And I'm carrying the heat
I don't care about nothing so
Now I'm incarcerated in YGC.

-Young Sam B2

From The Beat: Do you really not care about anything, Young Sam? If this is true, why do even bother to carry heat? Since your life means so little to you, the least you can do is let others live theirs without beef with you.

A New Month

Thank God for this new month in this hell hole. It seems like these months going by too fast, but I think this is the wrong place for these months to go by fast. This gon bring happy and sadness for me because it's my birthday month.

I go for my 707 hearing this month so I'm happy my 707 about to be over, or coming to an end, but I 'm sad I'm having my birthday in this place and not with my fam.

-Lil' Dakota B4

From The Beat: Well Happy Birthday Dakota. We know it is hard to be locked up on your birthday. Just look at it as a lesson learned. Just don't forget the time you spent your birthday in jail. Use it as a way to prevent yourself from coming back so that you can spend your future birthdays in freedom.

Dislikes

The things that I dislike about some counselors in the system is that they act like they're communicating well, but I see deep inside they are still living in the racist days. I thought those days were over, but it seems like when the black counselors are working with the white counselors it's like competition between them and that really hurts me a lot 'cause the frustrations turns out on me and other detainees.

It's already hard being locked up like a caged animal, and I don't need more stress than I already have blocked up.

-Roach B4

From The Beat: Yes, it is unfair for them to put their frustrations on you guys, but unfortunately you'll find this kind of thing everywhere you go in life. It's not just the system, it's the world. But since you said that it hurts you to see them compete against each other just because they are two different races, what do you make out of black on black crime? Or white on white? Asian on Asian? Aren't those also forms of racism, people killing their own race that goes on day after day? Our advice to you is focus on yourself, not what's going on around you while you are in jail. Some things are just totally beyond your control to change, so focus on those things that you can do something about.

Fro's Song

Getting tired of being a paycheck to the system
Getting tired of living my life in a jail
Getting tired of picking up evil ways instead of wisdom
When I die am I going to heaven or hell?
Stay up. It's short but it' sweet..

-Afro B4

From The Beat: Getting tired of this is not such a bad thing if it moves you in a different direction. The question we have is, once you're no longer in it, will you still be tired enough (or remember how tired you were) to do what you have to do not to put yourself in this situation again?

Take Responsibility

I feel the response that you wrote that said, "Take what consequences come with your actions." If people took responsibility for they own actions, it would be a better world instead of people pushing their problems off on others, or easing the weight by putting it on other's shoulders.

-Diamond Pg B4

From The Beat: So what do you do with your problems? Do you push them onto others? Or do you take care of your own problems? You are right that it would be a better world if everyone took responsibility for their own actions, but we can't change "everyone," only ourselves. Do you take responsibility for your actions? That's one step

Who Can You Trust?

Damn dude, I went to court today and my PO played me. He said I should be getting out today with an ankle bracelet, but when I went to court his recommendation was for me to go to a group home out of the city. But it's cool though.

But the worst thing is that my boy told his lawyer that I did everything on the felony assault case when I'm the one locked up and he out there. He was the one that started and did everything on the assault, so I don't know what to do 'cause one of the victims said I only socked him. I hope the trial gon' turn out good, and that's gon' be on 8-23-04.

-Btg B1

From The Beat: The biggest problem we have with this, Btg, is that you focus on who's playing whom and who's snitching on whom, instead of looking at your own participation (whatever it was) in assaulting another person. We hope the trial turns out for you, too, but we also hope you take some personal responsibility for how you are playing yourself by giving the system, your PO, the judge, etc. the power they need to control your life. Time for you to take some control yourself!

Just To Fit In

Once there was a boy. He was seven years old. He thinks that he's tough, but he's really not because he is scared to fight anybody. He just act tough just to fit in with some people that could fight. That is almost like a follower.

You shouldn't be a follower just to fit in with other people. You should always be a leader not a follower because a follower would be like a servant to the leader of the group.

-Maurice B1

From The Beat: This is excellent advice, Maurice. We just want to remind you that all seven-year-old children are followers. How could they lead? Who would follow? So, don't be too hard on that child you write about. Just let him grow into the man he can be, so that he can lead himself out of here and into a better future.

the worst thing is that my boy told his lawyer that I did everything

What Is A Hard Hitter

A hard hitter can come from anywhere, ain't no special area. A hard hitter is some one that can take it all and give a 100% more than he got. It means that ya hard and will never break. It's some what the same. It means that you stable and ready at all times.

-Diamond Pg B4

From The Beat: We had to cut a few words from this piece, so it may not say what you intended it to say. We don't think we have to explain why, but if we do, then you still don't understand — or don't respect — The Beat.

Thanks For Coming

To Jason, I would just like to thank you for taking time out of your day to come up here and drop some knowledge on us. I'm really glad that you didn't come in here on some spiritual type shhh. You kept it real. A lot of people do that when they come talk to us. They fabricate shhh, that's why we don't listen. They make everything out to be so perfect. You didn't. And for that I got much respect for you.

-Tru B5

From The Beat: We also have much respect for Jason for all the reasons you mentioned, Tru. Even though we know what you mean when you say he didn't get "spiritual," we know you felt his spirit, just as we do, so maybe we should expand our definition of spiritual to mean something more than religious. Jason definitely keeps it real, and for that we also thank him — and you for paying respects.

Every Person Is Three People

Every person is three people: what they see themself as, what others think of them as a person, and the person that they really are. Now, I've read that not too long ago in one of these books I have read.

Now I see myself as a person that do my thing when I'm in the streets or have to. On the other hand, when the time arise to do good, I don't turn my back. What other people see me as I really can't say. All I can do is guess. Here's my guess.

People see me in a different light. Like my family see me as a smart youngsta with a temper who can go either way in life. Now people that are around me all the time while I'm in the streets feel that I have no conscience when I'm in the streets. Now who I really am I feel is a person who do what he has to do and what I feel I need to do.

-Leek B5

From The Beat: When you divide yourself into those three parts, Leek, it's hard for you to tell us both how you see yourself and how you really are, because, according to your division, those might be different things. We see you as a young man with tremendous potential whose been given the gift of a good brain. But the brain can be used to good or bad, so how you live up to that potential will determine who you really are.

Once you're locked up, you're locked up.

It Used To Be Official

What it is, Mayne? I'm about to be out this shhh. My PO. tried to play me, but it's cool 'cause I ain't going to Glenn Mills. I'm gonna go to a group home. I ain't trippin' though 'cause at least I get home passes and I could see my girl.

Bein' up in here for this long really makes me think like, "Damn! I had it hella good on the outs. I had a mash wit' two 15s in the back, a fine girl, bread, a job, a cool house, blunt smoke every day, and hella other shhh. Basically, Man, my shhh was just crackin' and everything was official. I had all the freedom to do what I wanted.

Now I ain't got shhh. Being locked up is the pits, and it really makes you think about all the shhh you took for granted on the outs. When in my box, I be thinking about all the places that I've been and how crackin' it was. Damn, Las Vegas be hittin', that shhh be hella fun. Last time I went there, I stayed out every night all night. It was hella females all over. It be hella hot and hella shhh to do.

Anyways they rushin' me, so I got to go.

-Jue B4

From The Beat: Jue, we wish you luck and we thank you for bringing us piece after piece of wonderful writing every week. We will miss you and your writing, but you know you can always write to us from wherever you go. We hope you'll be able to tell us about a lot of other places you've never been, because now is the time to discover the world. Don't risk losing that chance again.

Why?

Why won't my PO listen? My PO is not cool. I wish he get off his vacation and come talk to me.

-Danielle

From The Beat: Sorry we had to cut some of this piece, but you can never be sure about who's reading The Beat.

If I Ruled The World

(Hook 2X)
If I ruled the world/Imagine That (2X)
We wouldn't have no rules
We'd do what we wanna do
Wouldn't need to hustle no mo'
Imagine that (2X)
'Cause we'd all shine
We'd have money cars and clothes

(Hook 1X)
And we can drink and we can get high every day
Wouldn't worry 'bout no cops being on our case
We could post up on the block if we felt that way
And shhh would just not go if it didn't go our way

(Verse)
If I ruled the world and everything in it
Weed and riches we will all get high and count Benjamins
No limit to the things we do
It will all be official ballin' like King Tut
'cause that's what we do
Everythang gon be suited up
And every car you see me in
gon be candy painted and souped up
Everythang would be spectacular
Wouldn't have to worry 'bout a bunch of crooked cops backstabbing ya
It will be no laws to break
Everybody will have the recipe on how to stack yo weight
The real with the real, the fake with the fake
High tech shhh that will leave you stuck if you can't relate
(To be continued ...)

-M-Burna B5

From The Beat: With your skills and imagination, M-Burna, you don't have to rely on NAS to inspire your lyrics, you can go in your own direction. We encourage imagination, even when it leads to fantasy, but since this is fantasy, what are the real (and realistic) changes you'd like to see if you ruled the world?

Don't Matter

Bein' in the max unit don't mean shhh. You locked up regardless of what unit you're in. The only thing different about here is they play you close. Half of these ninjas don't belong here.

So, for those who think that bein' in the max unit is a big deal, don't get yourself worked up 'cause this ain't shhh.

Once you're locked up, you're locked up. And that's that.

-Young Fatz B5

From The Beat: Sadly, you're exactly right, Young Fatz — except we would conclude that it IS a big deal, whether you're in max or min. Being locked up is a big deal, because it is a form of slavery in which the "slave" has done something to allow his freedom to be stripped. The distinction to be made is not between "max" and less than max, but between freedom and slavery.

Bein' Hard-Headed

Bein' hardheaded is what got me in here. I know it sounds stupid sayin' it, but it's the truth. Postin' on the turf from dusk till dawn like it wasn't no tomorrow, havin' moms worryin' 'bout if her son gon make it home.

Then, when I do go home, she lookin' like she ain't never slept all night. But I just walk right by her like nothin' wrong. Then when she tell me that she been worryin' bout me, I feel bad. But still that ain't stop me from bein' hardheaded.

Now that I'm in here lookin' at some "serious" time, and moms is hurtin', I wish I wouldn't've been so damn hardheaded.

-Young Fatz B5

From The Beat: Yeah, we wish you hadn't been so hard-headed, too, but we have to ask: are you wishing that because you're here, or because you realize how you disrespected the one person who's done more for you than any other? In other words, if you could be promised that you could continue to disrespect her without the consequences you're now facing, would you continue to disrespect her? Why do you think you acted the way you did? Is there anything — short of being locked up — that might have made you see what you were doing in a way that would change your behavior?

You kept it real. Don't a lot of people do that when they come talk to us.

Denied

Today we went to court and was denied our request to be released. My next court date is November 17. That's 90 days from this date (August 17). We most likely are gonna get out on that day. It seems like a long time away. But it's better than three years.

I'm just gonna ride my time out. The only thing that bothers me the most is that it's eight days after my 18th birthday. I was hoping to be out before that, but thing's didn't work that way.

On November 17, The Beat better be looking for me 'cause I'm comin' for a job.

-Tru B5

From The Beat: You'll always be welcome at The Beat, Tru, on November 17 or any day. We're sorry about the judge denying your release, but one thing is for sure: You will always remember your 18th birthday, and you'll be able to use that memory to make sure all the birthdays that follow will be celebrated in freedom!

Wild

I was born in Mexico. My life is hard because I/we don't have as much choices in life. Like having good pay, license, and freedom. What I mean about freedom is if we get into trouble two to three times we get deported. So I was born to be wild.

- Perico

From The Beat: What do mean by "represent to the fullest" and "Born to be wild"? Sounds like because of your situation, you need to NOT be wild. What are you thinking? Do you want to be deported? – If so then, you're on the right path. If not, well you need to change – don't you think? Represent who you are, but recognize! Who are you? Are you someone that will take what little opportunity you have here and build on it, or are you gunna get deported; sadly, like many others that crossed that border before you.

Born To Be... Me

What's crackin'? This is the homie Green Eyes about to write on this topic, so check it out!

Well, I was born to be what I am right now, and that's a gang member. When I was little, pops was in and out of the pen, so basically I was always out there in the 'hood, postin' and doin' dirt! Feel me! I think I was born a little rascal because when I was little, my bros and me used to whoop on fools. I was only like around 6-12 doin' little dirt.

Then I started comin' to the Hall! I started to gangbang when I was nine, but I've always been around it since I was born because my dad, uncles, and cousins gangbanged, but that's not the reason I bang. I chose to bang 'cause that's what I'm about!

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: Do you think that you will always be a gang member? Are you willing to give up your whole life and freedom for this gang of yours? If you had grown up in a different environment, do you think you would have chosen a different path?

I Look Forward To...

I look forward to leaving this bad place
Look forward to being in my bed
Looking forward to getting myself together
RIP Sd, Mitta, Adi

-Bo

From The Beat: Keep looking forward. What else? Do you have any goals? What does it mean to get yourself together? Tell us more.

I'm Back

Well, what's up Beat? I'm back for a change of placement. But let me tell you what happened.

Me and some other girls AWOL'd. One of the girls got a date-rape drug, and she told the cops and the staff that I had something to do with it!

My group home said that they did not want me back. So now I am just waiting. I go to court on August twenty-seventh. They want me to go to another county, but I ain't feelin' it. Well, I got to go now.

-Sad Girl

From The Beat: We're happy to see you but not happy to see you doing dead time in the Hall again. We hope you get a placement soon that will take you in and help you out, old friend.

Bad Times

What the freak is going on with my life? My girl left me! I have no place to go!

I'm locked up in Juvenile Hall with these weak ol' counselors. I can't kick it at my house. Every time I sit down in here, I gotta get back up and do this stuff that they always tellin' me to do — like make my bed, sweep the yard, whatever they say.

-Chris

From The Beat: Don't let the frustration knock you on your duff, even when you feel like you've had enough. Just hang tough when times get rough. You'll be okay, and home again one day.

Crazy Homesick

Hey, how ya doing Beat? Well, I just got here at Camp on 8/17/04. And they told me I have to wait three weeks to get a home pass.

I'm hella mad, because as soon as I got here — they changed the rules! Man, I haven't been home in four months, and I can't wait to go home. Being locked up for a long time, can make a homie go crazy!

I only got four months at Camp, so I should pimp this. It is pretty darn boring though. All I do here is lift weights all day and kick back. The only thing I look forward to, is my visits. I gotta go. Peace out.

-Oroz

From The Beat: By the time you read this in The Beat, you'll be about ready for that first home pass (if you didn't mess up). And school will have started — both regular classroom and GED. So you'll have more to occupy your mind if you're willing to focus. So we hope you're feeling better.

The only thing I look forward to, is my visits.

My Court Date

Well, what's up? What's crackin' with y'all. Today I went to court in downtown Oakland.

All they did was set my trial date. So I go back for trial on the sixteenth of September. Meanwhile, I'm just here bustin' down on the yard every day like some real G's.

To all up in the Hall, at Camp and YA, stay up and stay strong. Stay on your two feet, head up and always keep trucha.

Hopefully, I beat my case and go back to Camp. Till next time, much love and respect. Alrato.

-Young Gato

From The Beat: We'd smile at your "like some real G's" if we didn't think you might not be that far from becoming one of those G's on a penitentiary yard — you've got to find a better role model, another way to prove you're solid. And by the way, we have yet to read a piece about your temper. We know you will face a fight, but can you walk away from one? Can you choose your fights? Or do you always lose your head before you know what's up next? Lastly, we don't want you or any Beat writer to blatantly communicate to fellow homies, that's why your piece was downsized. Thanks.

My One and Only Tiffany

baby girl my heart is based on you
'cause no matter what you do
you always will be my boo
never break your heart
because you always been true
i know you can't stand my lies
but it's all right as long as i try
to be cool but baby
i hate what you say lately
you said i always be fake
and said i never loved you
but baby you don't know
i've always loved you
so baby don't leave me
because it's always been so easy
to have me for your own
i know you want to touch me
smell me kiss me fight me
but that's good because
you will always have this
love always to my baby tiffany

-Tommy Boy

From The Beat: You've got to promise her more than you'll just try, 'cause that sounds like you plan to fail, by and by. Promise her you'll be true; then do that do — if you want her to be true to you.

I'm Sorry

i'm sorry for the things i did
please forgive me i'm sorry
i know it's hard to be separated
i'm locked up now but
when i get out of here
i'm going to change
i know all the bang
things i did was wrong
i act stupid sometimes because...

-Jeremy

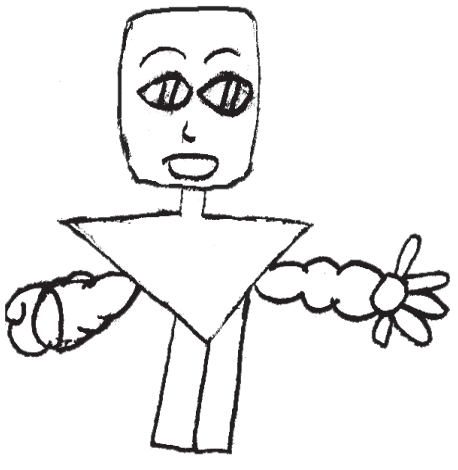
From The Beat: So why do you "act stupid sometimes" — because you bang? You're high? You're mad? It would be helpful for you to know why, so next time you can stop sooner. Being sorry for what you did is the first step to changing what you do!

Little Man Syndrome

I been a menace to my community
Ever since I hit puberty
An adolescent Puerto Rican name Young Smokey
The littlest ninja but hyphie like a red nose
Known' to light shhh up like a Newport to a stove
Like ninjas in the Hall they already know
I got little man syndrome
Not afraid to throw blows
Stays talking shhh, loves to speak my mind,
But ninja get twisted wit' me, I blow up like a mine
Reason I'm like this is 'cause ninjas think they can
pick on Smokey
And I ain't never been no sucka homie
So I got to show ninjas I ain't no phony

-Young Smokey

From The Beat: What are you trying to prove? Just be confident in who you are and stop trying to prove yo' self. If you are confident in yourself that you ain't no sucka then there should be no need to advertise.



If Ya Feel Me

this is ya boy h-k
ya feel me
from the town
those who know me
know what i'm talkin' 'bout
anyway what i'm lookin' forward to
is me a' my brothers get up out of here
ya feel me
go back to where we from and kick it
ya feel me
get off on some purp some e'n'j
if ya feel me
then after that go kick it with my chick
blaze with her and moms and grandma
if ya feel me
so judge do ya feel me
let me and my bras go
anyway i pray fo' y'all every day
if ya feel me bra
i know you gon' read this
so this goes out to my boy
can't say no names
but ya feel me
we suppose' to be in the town kickin' it
if ya feel me
i'm'a be in the town fo' life
an' that's on my future wife
if ya feel me
hatas gon' hate like we is bra
playas gon' play
so do me a favor
keep ya head up an' get big
if ya feel me
i keep ya in my prayers every day
if ya feel me
i'm out bra love y'all
keep ya head up

-Hk

From The Beat: We'll put this one out there to carry your prayers, but from what you say here — you don't really know what to pray for. 'Cause the life you're looking forward to won't keep you free but will send you back somewhere like this to live under lock and key. If you don't learn from your mistakes, you're doomed to repeat them. You may not have meant those threats we didn't print, but if you do, then you better stop and think — or you may never get free again! Ya feel, young friend.

Peaches

P Pretty as heck
E Beautiful energy
A As sweet as I wanna be
C Curious about life
H High intelligent
E Everybody loves me
S Shy

-Peaches

From The Beat: Nice!

Inside and Out

man beat within
check this out
i'm locked up
inside and out
that's all i got
i'm out

-Lil' Sam

From The Beat: The key to the outside is not in your hands. The key to the inside, is.

Brought Up to Die Young

it's almost like this
a premeditated death wish
i'm gettin' shot up
'cause the way i was brought up
every night i visualize me dying
ain't no hope in surviving
because my heart
won't let me stay on this earth
'cause it only gets worse
where I see my folks
and family carry me in a hearse

-Lil' Rickie

From The Beat: You're heart is sick, and you need to start quick with a treatment to heal it. You can't go on the way you've been going — your heart knows it, so it's showing you visions of death. Take a deep breath and make up your mind that now's the time to change — 'cause your heart just can't take the pain.

Pimp, Pimp, Player

I'm all alone in this world, she said

Ain't got nobody to share my bed.
Ain't nobody to hold my hand
The truth of the matter
I ain't got no man

Big boy opened his mouth and said

Trouble with you is
You ain't got no head
If you had a head and used your mind
You could have me with you
All the time

She answered, babe, what must I do?

He said
Share your bed
And your money too

-Baby Shaena

From The Beat: Hmm, what is it about this piece that makes us uncomfortable? He won't fill that space in her life that she's missing. Sounds like this kind of guy will just create more problems. She doesn't want to just share her bed – Does she? She's looking for someone to love, someone to share a life with, a happy life. It's unfortunate that many young girls take this offer without thinking about what kind of mess they are getting themselves into. How can we educated these females – and let them know, that this "guy" is NOT what they are looking for?

Why Do We?

Why do we find haters?
Because they hate
Why do we find haters and
Come across shadier
Come inside the gates
Ninja always hate
Look at me wrong people
Think they strong
Come in my home
While I'm gone
So many haters
With thei' pimp suit with gaters
Think you're tight but you're just haters
Wonder why people die
Just daydream in the sky
Why do we find haters?
Because they just hate

-Real Lil' Teane

From The Beat: Interesting flow. Why do we – find haters? Who knows? What do you think makes a person hate? Jealousy? Envy? Where does this hate come from? Do you hate anyone? Does that make you a hater? Tell us more about haters. What is their purpose? Will there ever be any use for haters? Or would this be a better world without them? Who is not a hater –A lover?

What My Family Always Told Me....

My family also told me to be strong and nothin' won't go wrong.

-Listening

From The Beat: How are you remaining strong through your time incarcerated?

People Won't Listen

It seems like whenever I really mean what I say, people won't listen — because they get tired of hearing it! Because they think I won't ever change but that I'm always going to say what people want to hear — but that really not true!

But now I got used to people not caring what I got to say. And it really don't matter, because I got to prove to myself before I even care what others think anyway. But now it's always good to have somebody to listen to you, because you might explode if you hold everything in!

-Lil' Mono

From The Beat: We've seen you write what we're not happy to hear, not that we judge but we fear — for you. We fear that you're still too caught up in the idea of maintaining a reputation on the street, that will only lead to a reputation in the Pen'!

Getting Better

I do not know what to write about this week, but here goes. My life is getting better. I am doing my program, doing what I need to be doing to get out and stay out.

I am sure I'm going to stay out! I am not going to let my life fall off track no more — not going to let myself go crazy! I am going to try to be the best I can be. I am going to change my life.

Well, I got no more time to write, so I'll write better things next week. I am out. Much love. Stay up and watch your shhh.

-The Gypsy

From The Beat: What are you like when you let yourself "go crazy"? What will you be doing differently? Tell us how you're so sure you won't ever come back? Give us the details of your plan, 'cause more than a few would like to know how to stay out!

My Love

It's been hard being without you for these past two weeks
And I've missed you because I've been in heat

My love for you heats me hard
When I'm not even able to send you a card.

I love you with all my heart and soul
At night when I think about you I start to get cold
You are my strength and my threshold

Our relationship has been stronger
But every time I get out of jail I do something I feel is wrong
And each time I be in here longer

I hate the fact that I'm locked in here
And this don't make me sincere

I've turned to God and I've prayed
That I will be with you for the rest of my days

I'm in love with a boy name Eric and he's been there for me through thick and then
And I pray that our relationship never ends

-Kannisha

From The Beat: It feels so good to be in love. Sometimes we find ourselves in these situations where we have to be apart from that special someone. It hurts. But, what is the best way to handle this situation, that is out of your control. Just have faith. Sometimes being separated from the one you love can make your bond that much stronger. What do you think? Through thick and thin, like you said.

The County

Man, the county is doing us so bad right now on my momma. I'm hella fat. And when they gave us a teaspoon of Chili-Mac, I was hella mad. With one slice of bread and a glass of water. Then threw the rest of it away right in our face.

Man, I be wanting to just dive in that garbage and eat that shhh.

-Yana Bo

From The Beat: That's not funny. That's hella messed up. Why do you think that this happens? If you were in charge, what kind of food would you serve?

Why Won't Anyone Listen To Me?

No one will listen to me.

-Alone

From The Beat: We're listening. The paper always listens... and it won't talk back you or judge you...

Why Me

why do i live my life
in the fast lane
making several gees
avoiding my enemies
i choose this way to live
won't ask you to forgive

-Lil' Rickie

From The Beat: Maybe for a minute in the middle of a sleepless night, you get a glimpse of a life that would feel all right.

What Up, Beat!

What's up, Beat? This is Lil' Gato, sittin' here chillin' in the Hall. I'm still here waiting for Camp to come and swoop me up. I'm going to leave it like this now; so to all — just remember, after the storm there is always sunshine.

-Lil' Gato

From The Beat: We feel your wanting to send out your support to others locked down in the Hall, but we can no longer do just that. The Beat is not about shout outs especially when one or two bad apples take advantage of a good thing it ruins it for others. Yes, that's a large part of what The Beat's about supporting one another, but, much as we'd like to endorse your last line, we can't. If you keep riding the storm, then you will end with very little sunshine in your life — in reality, it could be a half an hour a day; or none. No diss, just keeping it real.

Waiting For Camp

Yeah, it's me, Lil' Rickie, chillin' in the Hall. I'm still waiting for Camp. It's been a minute now, but I'll be up there soon. To all the folks, stay up!

-Lil' Rickie

From The Beat: Camp is chance to change, but you don't see it. What a shame!

To My Real Ninjas

To my real ninjas, locked up, got time — to my ninjas in the neighborhood on the block on the spot — to my ninjas still shinin' in jail like Lil' Johnny — to my ninjas that never look back — to my real ninjas that stay real when time real hard — to my real ninjas don't know when they gon' leave the world —

Now I'm locked down, mad as a cow, mouth hurting like a fresh frown — missing my ninjas, my real ones at that. That's what I get — listening to staff, j-cats! So when I get out, it's time for a change, stack my chips and flip a Range. But I got to get out the system, even if I have to leave them behind.

-Lil' Lee

From The Beat: Shining in jail? That's a straight fairy tale. And if you're back on the street doing the same old, you're going to find out just how cold the system can get. Staff here are your best friends, compared to where you'll end — no if's, and's, or but's! Say what?

Hunnert Per Cent Street

thugs an' wanksta detainees
and gentlemen
yup it's the future
hear this thug veteran
a clever man
and anybody feel
they could ever win
an' better than me
then the funk it will never end
now here i go
thugged out with flows
county shoes and clothes
no slack beating on dohs
and y'all should know
that i ain't never been a mark
a hundred per cent from the street
where you gotta have a heart
but i'm not gon' get into that
i be the future yes i be that
and it's a wrap when i get the chance
to see you go' stupid and dumb
and make you dance
i'm kind of curious
i'm feeling delirious
you hear me rep'
it's conspicuous that i go ridiculous
and i don't care if you suckas don't like me
just check me out nightly
i'm hyfee
doin' it rightly
but oh so nicely
the high and the mighty

-Young Dee

From The Beat: No question but that you can spit, yet you still come with that played-out ish, thugged-out wish you could be back on the street claiming fame in a scandalous game where you got your name on hot and can't even go near the spot — not if you want to stay free! But you won't change your game, so back to County you came — and if you call that one hundred per cent street, then you need to stop, think and redirect your feet!

Sickness

Right now I'm sick. I just got a straight through call to the hood and we got some bad news. One of the homies got hit up.

Man that got me sick right now because I was just talking about him. Right now I want to express my feelings, but I can't because it will mess my release up.

I really want to start crying, but I can't show no harsh feelings around none of these marks. They might take it the wrong way; so I'm go end this right here.

Rest In Peace "Hitman" and "Ronezz," "Tip Toe," Kenny Mack, Z-Cash.

-Theo

From The Beat: That hurts when we lose a loved one. We are sorry to hear that. It makes us sick to hear about all these deaths as well. What can we do as a community? If anything we hope it inspires you to do what is right for you and your family and that is to get up out of the system and into the school house.

Going Dumb

When someone don't listen to me, I get mad and I end up going dumb and I will maybe start fighting.

-Unknown

From The Beat: Hmm... don't go dumb! That's more than dumb, that's stupid. Find new ways to express yourself – do push-ups, read, write, find something positive to do with all that energy. You'll only be hurting yourself if you go stupid!

I'm'a be sober an' still have fun, you feel me!

Best Mom Ever

My momma got to be the strongest mom. I'm so hardheaded and she still deals with me.

I could see if my father lived with me, but she's solo. So I want to give thanks to Lanita my momma, aka Londa, feel me Lyroy. I love you mom and I will always.

Love your number one son Davon.

See you when I get there.

-Lil' Davon

From The Beat: It's really had to raise a child as a single parent. You should share this piece with her. A mother can never hear the words "I love you" too many times.

When I Was At Camp

When I was at camp it was coo' because you outside all day. And I hella miss be outside because now I'm in the Hall again and this shhh hella boring.

Man I miss bein' at camp. It all happened when I was on a home visit in June when I did my crime, but I didn't get caught at that time. Then in August, on a Friday when I was waiting for my brother to pick me up to go home, I seen the police go up there. And I was saying to my homie, I hope it ain't for me. And like a minute later they called to the office and when I went up there seen Mr. Reid smiling at me and told me to go to the back, and when I entered the room I saw two 5.0's, and Mr. Reid closed the door behind me. And the 5.0 told me why they were there, and they told me what I was getting arrested for, and that was my last day at camp.

Now I'm in the Hall.

-Lil' Manpreet

From The Beat: Man, Lil' Manpreet, what can we say? Damn! Well we all learn our lessons, so of us learn the hard way. Sometimes it takes five or six, even fifteen times to learn. When will you learn? You wanna enjoy life? Well, you've got to make smart decisions that will improve the quality of it. You'll learn one day – you wanna wait? The earlier you start making smart decisions, the earlier you get to enjoy the benefits. What do you think?

Some Sober Thoughts On Fun

'Sup! This that lil' homie, Culero, kicking it with The Beat today! So what's up? Why am I born wild? 'Cause I love to have fun, but most of the time I was high or drunk with the homeboys, especially when I went to school in Hayward.

I went to Tennyson High School, an' my homeboy Lou would go to my house in the morning, an' then we'd go to the liquor store an' buy a 211 forty ounce. So when we'd do that, we'd walk on to school on the railroad tracks, drinking it like it's water. Then we'd be at school, an' be all drunk, funking with rivals at school, an' we'd be havin' hella fun; an' I mean, fun!

But, man, I've noticed when you're drunk you get all excited an' you want to fight someone an' that trash ain't cool! I didn't notice that stuff till I ended up in this borin' ol' place. So that's why I don't plan to drink no more; well, not until I get more mature and I can handle it!

When we'd see a rival, the homie, Lou, be on'im — so he caught a case, too. So we're both being sober. An' I've been having fun, even when I'm sober — so for now, I'm'a be sober an' still have fun, you feel me!

But for the rest of the paper, I want to make a shout-out to thos who know me. An' to all up in the Hall, good luck with y'all.

-Culero

From The Beat: You need to know that they really can lock up a homie forever. There are so many lies that folks keep telling each other so often that they begin to sound like truth. But know this — they can lock you up forever! So think about if you want to go back to jumping rivals till someone gets killed and you take the rap whether you did it or not. That's real talk, and if you're as in love as you say you are — you will change your life if you ever want to have a family and a wife to come home to. We congratulate you on your sobriety, but will you still be sober when you hit Camp with weekend visits to outside society?

after the storm there is always sunshine.

Never Come Back

When I get out of here, I'm going to never come back — because this place is not meant for me!

The only placement for me is my house! For one thing, you would be free — and never would I come back here! If you did, it would be on you!

-Sam

From The Beat: What's your plan to stay free? (A) Be more slick with your criminality, or (B) quit and go legit? Plan A, you'll be back, okay? Plan B, you'll be home to stay. And, yes, it's on you.

Juvenile Hall

Why do kids come to juvenile hall? Is it to make us don't want to come back and don't want to see us anymore; and I know they don't want to see me anymore, but it's hard in the streets because some of my homies were killed.

My little brother got shot, and it's hard living in Oakland.

RIP Mike, Ant, Tank, Will, Jay Jay, Bee-Bo Crettdy-Bo, Getty-Bo, Thomas, Ray-Ray and Mack money.

-D-money

From The Beat: Why do kids come to the Hall? Do you think that if the Hall was tougher, then kids would think before they make the decisions that they make? Or do you feel like crime is the only choice in Oakland? Why? Does life have to be like this? In your next piece, tell us what you think.

No One Listens

I think no one listens to me because everybody got their own problems. Sometimes my grandmother listens to my problems, but it does make me feel good.

Sometimes, I keep my thoughts to myself because my family doesn't understand me. I always give my little sister and brother's advice to stay in school 'cause the streets are not cool. In the streets, only three things are going to happen to you: You end up dead, homeless, or in jail. That's what my uncle says.

What made me get into the street life? Hangin' out with my older cousin, going to house parties, drinking, smoking, and just being out in the streets.

-Keith

From The Beat: Well, if you know the destination of the street life, then why do you continue to live it? What can you do to set yourself up for a good future rather than a future you don't want?

Do Somethin' With Ya Self

I got wild fed ta' earn
Lead ta' burn
Stop sign on ya' slot time
Bid ya' torn
A lot of cats gotta wait till they dead ta learn
Pasta read the sermon, ya' learnin'
I'm a wild card to play
Guard ya pay
Good-bye is hard ta say
Bet ya' mom's a pray
I'ma rap till I'm hard and gray
Pardon mae, launch grenade
At ya' entourage and blaze
Calm yo' rage
I ain't even on ya' page
Ya' see through like lingerie.

-Ginetty

From The Beat: Your flows is hard like a rock; might put a hole in a sock. If you had some beats; it would knock. Now you gotta stay focused and be devoted to adding another rhyme to your flow list.

My Mistakes

I take responsibility for all my mistakes, the ones I've done to hurt my mom, and the ones that I haven't made yet.

Also, I take responsibility for all the people that got hurt on my behalf. That's all I take responsibility for.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Taking responsibility is the first step towards becoming an adult. What can you do to make sure that your next move isn't a mistake?

Put it In My Pocket (PIMP)

Everybody I talk to listens to me because I am the man to everybody. I talk to my mom, my breezies, and my patnas. I got mack game and it's as smooth as lotion.

I was born good until I started wanting to be a pimp. That's when it went bad.

I'm lookin' forward to being the biggest pimp in America, the American pimp, (Put it In My Pocket).

I wanted to start pimpin' when I was about thirteen years old. I was watching this DVD at Hot August Nights. I seen them pimps with all them breezies, all that money, and just having hella fun. They were clean in them pimp suits and them pimp cups.

All women ain't tricks and hoes, just some are, and they are the ones that you tell them to do something, and they do it. At the same time, in a way, you just got to be a slick-talker and sell some dreams. Talk your way into some stuff. If you ain't got no job, that' something you can do to get some quick cash: Get a chick and tell her to get with the program.

-P-Daddy

From The Beat: We still don't see why you wanted to be a pimp — the jewelry, clothes and cash? It seems like you admired the material things more than the lifestyle itself. If you went to college and made legit money and bought the same items — would you be content with being a doctor or a lawyer? If you make legit money as a doctor, then you ain't gotta worry about the law taking it from you. But once a chic leaves your pimpin' jurisdiction — then you're broke as a joke. The girl makes you and... she can break you too.

I Hate This Life

They got me yelling — I hate this life.
I never got my rights.
These white men are abusing their authority.
Most of the people dying in the streets are minorities.
It's a messed up society, but I never let it get the best of me.
At all times, I keep my game tight and my money right.

-Baby Samoa

From The Beat: It's true that young minorities are dying left and right. But how can you distance yourself from that life? How can you make a better future for yourself?

Hillcrest

The Rap

I don't have much to say,
but what the hell is wrong with this world today?
Sex, drugs, and violent crimes.
Always read books to pass the time.
People always express what's on their mind.
Well...they should, but some keep it inside, try to hide.
All balled up. Don't know when they going to blow,
tellin' 'em you don't know what to do.
Well...get a job or two or get a clue
What is goin' on with your life.
Don't try to fight or nothing.

-The Hockey Man

From The Beat: It's a hard thing to know what to do a lot of the time, Hockey Man. The best advice you give is, "don't try to fight or nothing." Keep playing hockey!

My Environment And Surroundings

Well, my name is Rhino, born in San Francisco and raised in South San Francisco, the city and varrio. I was adapted to be raised around uncles and an older brother who brought me around gang bangers. Now growing up, going up against our rivals. I don't do it for the fame, I do it for the cause.

-Rhino

From The Beat: Right, "the cause" — the cause that pulls your 'hood apart instead of building it up, that hurts instead of helps, that results in bloodshed instead of helping people rise from the poverty and violence that plagues them. Right on, Rhino.

Rogue Definitions

Rouge /roug/ n. adj.
1) A wild, lone animal:
That's how we roll in the streets of tha town
Gotta roll alone, be wild, and stand your ground
Trust nobody
That's how we get down
You must be wild or you gonna get punked
And you gotta stand your ground, or you gon' get lumped
Must neva talk to the cops in blue
Or them boys on da' block gon' be comin' fo' you.

Rogue /roug/ n. adj.
2) An evil, often dangerous man:
Gotta be rogues, that's how the media sees us
Talkin' down on our style, sayin' we need Jesus
But we already got 'im man, please believe us
We gotta be dangerous 'cause that's how we survive
We do what we do 'cause we wanna stay alive
Sell "D" to feed our family that's no lie
That's how we is in tha' streets, cold and dangeorus
Gotta lay low, we ain't tryin' to be famous.

Rogue /roug/ n. adj.
3) A person who enjoys tricks and teasing.

-Celly Cell

From The Beat: We take this piece as creative proof that you know what you're talking about when you drop the word "rogue" (though we're not sure how to take it when you address us facilitators as rogues as well). However, it's a sad commentary on you and your community that living up to a lone, dangerous status is the way you choose to make it. Gotta be rogues 'cause that's the way media sees you? Man, you've given up on the opportunity to define yourself that easily? You've lost already. Sell D to feed the family, but who's feedin' 'em when you're locked up and costing them money? Living up to the "rogue" label will bring you down.

I Was Born

I was born to be a criminal and a menace to society. I love makin' this world a worse place to live in. I can't be no punk, can't be no damn ho'. I'm like a grand national; they don't make 'em like me no more.

I also hate when people talk about changing themselves, and love, in The Beat Within. I hate reading that shhh. You're just taking up space, soft as fools.

-Indio

From The Beat: Even though we'd argue with you about every word in this piece — from you being born a certain way to your conclusion that those who write about change are soft — what we really want to say is this: back up what you write with explanation. Show us you've thought about your words, and get under them.

Learn

Learn from your mistakes
Learn from what you do
Learn from everyone else 'cause if you don't you screwed
Keep it on the low
Keep it on the hush
When someone tries to start funk don't throw that punch.

-Anthony

From The Beat: We feel your advice — it's short but sweet, and we hope people heed the wise words. What other wisdom do you have to offer?

Hopin' It's The Easy Way!

It feels like life has stop'
I see the same thing every day
Do I miss home?
Or I just ain't been locked up this long?

I been coming in and out
I never stop
Just don't know how
Maybe I like the pain
I'm young and restless

I don't know
One day I'll find out
Hopin' it's the easy way.

-Baby Juvenile

From The Beat: We hope it's the easy way, too, but unfortunately hopin' won't do too much about it. There's deep insight in raising the possibility that maybe you like the pain. What is it about the pain that you bring on yourself that you like? Maybe that can provide a starting point for ending the cycle of coming in and out.

Haters

Why sprinkle salt when I'm tryin' to shine?
You got your business, why you all in mine?
Keep to your own
And just leave me the hell alone.

This is what I do
So just mind your own and we'll be coo'
If you got somethin' to say
Maybe you'll be brave enough to say it to my face someday

Why can't we all just get along
Here, just chill and hit the bong?
Why you got to talk all that junk?
It ain't gonna do nothin' but 'cause unnecessary funk

All the haters just hate what they see
They're mad because they can't be me
I'll just leave it all to fate
And let the haters hate.

-Sad Girl

From The Beat: Unfortunately, there are going to be haters no matter where you go. How can you learn to let the hate slide off your shoulders, stopping only to brush it off and move on? The more attention you pay, the more fuel you provide to the haters. What part do you play in all the hating that's going on?

The Hall

The Hall is a jail
For minors it's hell
The Hall is no fun
It makes minors dumb
The Hall I hate
Being here makes me gain weight.

-Duane

From The Beat: Is there anything that could make the Hall better, while still recognizing that it's purpose is partially that of a jail? What would it take to make it a place that helped you gain, instead of lose, intelligence?

Think 'Bout It

Some people say
I'll never make it through
'Cause I've been coming in and out since 2002
They say I'll be in the new juvenile hall
And there I'll still bounce off the walls

Or CYA
They say they hope and they pray
That one day
They'll put me in YA
And keep me that way

Why they hate on me?
I didn't do nothing
I'm just being the beast I could be
And that's me
Lil' Bri Bri

I got to take it down
But I'm a go till my town
Keep yo' head up
And keep puttin' it down for yo' town
One day you'll see me around

-Baby Juvenile

From The Beat: We're thinking 'bout it, and we're left with some questions. How are you going to prove all the haters wrong? Is there a way you can learn to tame the beast that you are (or did you mean to write "the best you can be," which is a very different meaning)? Will puttin' it down for your time make the haters' predictions come true?

Alone

I don't know who to turn to
But this feeling of loneliness is nothing new
There's no one to share my pain
I don't even know how I stay sane

My thoughts whirl inside me
My emotions locked away and I have no key
I hide all my fears
And never show any tears

Friends I thought were true
Always run to someone new
They never stick around and see me cry
They don't even give a kind goodbye

My soul is an empty place
I hate to even look at my face
So now I feel a chill down to my bone
Because I know I'm all alone!

-Sad Girl

From The Beat: Wow — this piece really lives up to your Beat name. When things are at their worst, what do you do to stay sane? How can you let the pain out? One of the best things about writing is that the pencil and paper won't leave you behind — they'll always be there, whether to share your laughter or your tears. You're not alone — there are hundreds of people reading this piece and feeling you.

Keep Yo Head Up

(This is for my little friend)
I heard you went to CYA today
I cried.
'Cause I care for you
I know you ain't got nobody who knows you cares for you
So I say wassup with it
You got me
I do love you
If I didn't love you the way I say I do
I would have never wrote this
If you need me, I'll be right there
So just hold yo' head up
Like Ja' say
"Keep yo' H-E-A-D-U-P and neva G-I-V-E-U-P"

-Baby Juvenile

From The Beat: How can you set an example for your friend to follow? What will it take to stay supporting your friend from the outs?

Home Passes

What I look forward to is my six-hour home pass on Sunday from 2:30PM to 8:30PM. It was hard at first to come back here, but now it's getting easier because I only got four more weeks.

I'm looking forward to going home, but I'm gonna be put on house arrest and I have to do hecka stuff, but I ain't trippin' because I get off probation in nine months. I'm only 15. I will be 16 when I'm off probation.

I'm happy because people ain't getting off probation until they 18 or older, so I look forward to getting my life together.

-Megan

From The Beat: You sound like you're preparing yourself to return to the outs. How were you able to recognize that you have the chance to put your life back together? What's it going to take to start back down the right path?

No Longer A Prince

I'm no longer a prince
I have stepped down from royalty
I have now put up a fence
A fence around my mentality
I can't be what I'm not
For females, don't take me for real

-Celly Cell

From The Beat: No more charm, Celly? Why construct the fence around your mentality? Is it to protect the precious thoughts that are forming inside your head, or is it to keep others out?

I'ma Just Pray

So, here I am again
Behind these walls
Behind these locked doors
In these too familiar Halls

I'm released and I swear
On the outs I'ma stay
I'm released just to enter the same
Bullshhh that got me detained

Mom says my actions speak louder
Than the words that I say,
But she doesn't understand all the
Games people play

Locke up is where the "system"
Would like me to stay
And there ain't a word
I can say,
So I'ma just pray.

-Shy-stee

From The Beat: You're right that it's difficult, once you're in the system, to get out, and that adding to the challenge is that you're released to the same environment on the outs to face the same old challenges that helped lead you inside in the first place. However, we think that you can do more than pray. What will it take to make your actions speak loudly enough for the system to hear and leave you alone? How will you need to change your ways in order to ensure that you don't return? No doubt it's hard, but others have done it — so can you.

I'm Out

Two more days and I'm out this piece
No mo' doin' wrong
No mo' runnin' the streets
It's about time I wake up and get right
No mo' fightin' the system
No mo' sneakin' in late at night

No mo' smokin' an' drinkin'
Gotta get on point
Gotta start thinkin'
When they come an' call out my release
I'ma throw up two fingers and I'm out
like peace!

-Shortay

From The Beat: Peace to you, too. What's it going to take to get on point? How are you going to walk on the straight and narrow? What sacrifices are you going to be willing to make in order to stay up and out of the system?

The Truth

They got me locked up in this cell
Wondering is this here livin' hell
I can't be up in here this shhh is whack
I rather be on the outs puffin' on a Black
But when you on the streets you gotta know how to roll
Sometimes it's better to be in the Hall
At least your protected by them four brick walls
When you on the streets, it's kinda hard to survive
Hustlin' on them blocks trying to stay alive
Life is a struggle without a doubt
But you gotta be a soldier and stay savin' it out.

-The Professor

From The Beat: Stay savin' it out? Do you think that could be part of the cause of, and not the solution to, your problems? It is hard to survive on the streets, and it's a sad but true commentary that you feel that the Hall can be a better place. What can you do to make your life on the outs a better one; one that doesn't require a life on the streets where you characterize yourself as a soldier?

My First Time

This is my first time up in this place. While I am up in here I think a lot of what I did to get in here, and that I am really a stupid person that won't do nothin' stupid again to come back up in here.

I feel sorry for my mom and my dad because I put them through hell. When I get out, I am going to do a lot better in my life. All I could do is pray that the judge and my PO will let me go easy.

This is my first time up in here and I really don't like it. This place makes me think about my family a lot, and I miss them all. I just want to get out really bad. I am doing the best I can in my unit.

-Justin

From The Beat: We believe the passion you have to get out and stay out. We don't believe you are a stupid person, even if you did something stupid. Every one of us has done something stupid at different times in our lives. We are also overjoyed to hear that you are doing your best. Do you think about what you'll do when you get out? What are some things you could do to prepare yourself for your release? Keep your head up and if you need anything let us know. We'll tell you if we can get it for you or not.

My Way Out

I can't seem to get away
I really want to go but they tell me I have to stay
I don't know what to do
So I turn to memories of you

You're the only thing that makes me happy
I know this might seems sappy
But you're the only thing that keeps me going
You keep my blood flowing

I can't wait to get out and see you
I'm lost without my boo
I see your face when I sleep
I promise you my heart you can keep

I owe everything to you
Your love was always true
You taught me what love was about
You're my only way out.

-Sad Girl

From The Beat: It's wonderful to have someone to think about while you're locked up that can keep you going, but we think that in the end you're your only way out. What will it take to stay out once you return? How can those memories of times past be turned into wonderful times present?

Love

Love is something everyone need.
Love is like air. You need air to breathe.
God is the only person who can give you love.
Believe in God and you'll succeed, and you need God to live eternally.

-Jay

From The Beat: We agree that love is something everyone needs to live, or at least to live well. However, we hope that you can find love from someone aside from God. Is there anywhere else you can look for love, anyone else who has loved you?

He Told Me He Loved Me

He told me he loved me
I wonder if it's true
He told me he loved me
He even called me his boo
He told me he loved me
I even said it back too
He told me he loved me
I'm thinking what can I do
He told me he loved me
And wants to have kids
I finally got pregnant
And there it all ended
He told me he loved me
Was drummed in my head
He told me he loved me
But it all seems like lies
He told me he loved me
And every night cry
He told me he loved me
And now he's gone
But the Lord called him home
He told me he loved me and I told him the same
And the love is still here in my heart
But I wish it was real
From the start
RIP to mah boo.

-T-Tader

From The Beat: Wow — it's tragic enough to lose someone you love, let alone someone so young, but that he's also the father of your child is almost too much to bear. Further, it sounds like your relationship was on shaky ground, and that must also make it hard to have been left with so many questions for which there are no answers. How can you pick up the pieces of your broken heart and get back to the outs? How can the love that you still feel in your heart provide you with the strength you need to get yourself back on track?

Hard Life Time

I spent most of my time in Hunter's Point, which was no joke. I look around and see what is happening to me - my time on the street and my time in here. Ain't nothing funny about this shit.

I spent most of my youth in jail and the rest putting in major work for the block and my homies. I look at these fools in here wit' they fake ass war stories.

You want to see something, look into my eyes and I bet you would find what you're looking for. What can I say? I'm a G that been to war and back.

They say I'm a menace to the streets and anybody around me. I think different. My homies look at me as a thug lord, and my family looks at me a kind-hearted young man. I look at myself as a monsta and till I see different that's what I'm goin be.

-No Name

From The Beat: We sure wish we knew who we were responding to, but you forgot to put your name on your piece. We want to know, for example, whether you've always thought of yourself as a "monsta," and if not, when did that change start to happen, and why? And, if it hasn't always been that way, does it always have to be that way? How is it that your family can look at you so differently than you look at yourself? We remember a piece by a young man who described himself as a monster in the beginning, but at the end concluded that the monster has a heart. What about you?

My Story

My story is based on the real in my 'hood.
On the streets you gotta kill or be killed.
On the real you gotta feel what I feel
'cause youngstas nowadays my age is holding steel
Can't be a sucka or will get yo' cap peeled.
You either going to school or you doing drug deals.
I was broke. I really, really wanted me some scrill.

-John

From The Beat: Even though what you describe is very real, we can't buy the "gotta" part of kill or be killed. By saying you gotta pack, you're excusing yourself of all responsibility. "The Devil made me do it." No doubt you are faced with terrible choices that many youngsters never have to face, and we wish that weren't true. But even within those set of limited choices, we know others who have found that when they're "forced" to chose between A or B, they go for C. Is it possible? (By the way, how much scrill are you making now?)

Friends

Friends keep you out of trouble
Friends would not let you fall
Friends will be there when
you need someone to call
Real friends don't mess with the law
Can family members be a friend?
But family is the only people I depend on.

-Jay

From The Beat: Yes, family members can definitely be friends — they are often our best friends. Why do you think so many trust people who end up letting them down or leading them in the wrong direction? What would someone outside of your family have to do in order to earn your trust as a friend?

Fly Away

Right now I wish I was a bird so I can fly away from this place and fly home and never come back. I don't like to ask staff for permission for everything I do.

-Jaime

From The Beat: We can only try to imagine the humiliation of having to ask to use the toilet, to stand, to walk away. We hope you will remember these indignities when you are free so that you don't do anything to risk losing that precious gift of freedom.

So Sad But So Bad

I think babies are not born bad, but when you get out of babyhood you up against all odds — and the way I feel, it's me against the world baby! Because I had never had any back up in my life so I had to stack up for my own and that's the way I feel.

So sad but yet so bad.

-Insane

From The Beat: What are those odds that you were up against? What happened to the support that you should have had? You hint that there's more to this story — we'd love to hear it.

My 'Hood

'Cause I'm from East Palo Alto
Making money all day
Every day
With a bottle of Bombay
Drinking, smoking
And choking
That's where I be
24/7
Now I'm facing incarceration
Hoping and praying for another situation
Jail time ain't too game
Everything's the same
Waitin' to get released
To go back to them streets
And roll up some trees
And go back
To what I used to be
But one day I'll change
And hopefully it'll be today

-Manotas

From The Beat: If you keep writing about going back to the streets to do what you used to do, you'll keep getting our response which is only a fool would expect to do what he did and get different results. Are you a fool? We don't think so. We just hope we won't be seeing you walk out of here only to walk back in, and then telling us the system is pimping you. That change you hope to make "one day" can only come if that day is now. What's stopping you?

It Sucks

I'm very happy that I got a new baby cousin, but it sucks so much because I missed the two happiest days in my life — not seeing my first baby cousin and missing my other baby cousin — because I've been locked up, and it sucks so much.

My family came one time over here on Xmas. It sucks because I had court and the judge wanted to lock me up on Xmas. She didn't because my lawyer told her to not lock me up. It sucks so much because my aunt saw me going to court.

You know it hurt because my first baby cousin told me she loves me and I keep it gangster. I cried because I was going to be locked up and it sucks so much. But now I got a new baby cousin and when I get out I'm going to be there for her.

Much respect to all the homies.

-Shrek One

From The Beat: Of course it hurts to be separated from the ones you love, Shrek, but you have to think about the consequences of your own acts. We're really glad you're going to be there for your new cousin when you get out, but getting out is not as hard as staying out. So, whenever you're tempted to do the things that might lead you back here (or worse), which includes responding to provocation by fighting, just think of your cousins and how much they need you, and you need them.

The First Time

The first time I got locked up, I just turned a teenager. I got charged with a felony.

When I got out I thought that I was gonna do good, but I just ended up doing worse than before. A year later, I started banging. When I hit fifteen, I got charged with four felonies and two misdemeanors because I bucked at some people and they snitched on me. Now I'm in here stuck in the system.

What I'm trying to say is be careful with what you do and with that I'm out. This is Mondo, coming from San Mateo.

-Mondo

From The Beat: Are you still on this path, Mondo? (When you say "be careful," is it care not to do what you've been doing, or just care not to get caught?) Are you so foolish as to risk your entire future (or your life itself) on striking out? Do you think it can't happen to you, or does it just not matter? For us who prize our freedom so highly, we sure wish you (or someone) could explain this to us.

I Keep It Hoppin'

I keep it hoppin'
like Mary Poppins
when I'm coppin'
Run yo' mouth, end up 6 feet deep in a coffin
The Hall ain't nothin' but summer camp to a soldier
So I stay sucka free and brush haters off my shoulders

-Gobe Dimes

From The Beat: We encourage you to keep those haters off your shoulders. But we also encourage you to take the loss of your freedom seriously. Whether it's the Hall, CYA, county jail, or the pen, being locked up is more than nothin', even to a soldier!

I say forget those who disrespect and forget, those who oppose

I'm Tired Of These Haters

I'm tired of these fakers
They just put on a front, acting like promise makers
They say my shhh is cool
But they play me for a fool
Talk to show off in front of they peeps
Sayin' my poems is weak
If you gon' hate then hate
Don't show a fake mind state
If you like what I have to say
Then like it don't go the fake way
But if you ain't feelin' it, I ain't mad at cha
But don't say it's cool and then turn around and hate
You on one side or the other
Either hate or love this brother
That's the type of shhh that makes me mad
Just pick one side and be glad

-Celly Cell

From The Beat: We're so confident in you that we know a person of your caliber doesn't let other people get to him often. Why is this time different? Is it because you take that much pride in your writing? Or are you writing this to bandage up your injured reputation? If you are, we don't think it's necessary. For we enjoy all the pieces you send us. Please keep it that way.

Shining Bright

Five pointed star shining down on my eyes
being wise,
eternally staying alert when I rise,
I'm blind to the purpose of life,
my explicit actions keeps me going
'cause I'm as sharp as a knife.
My sins may be forgiven but my mind will never change.
My goals may take awhile but it's never out of range.
I'm putting my family in pain
and it hurt me even more.
It feels like I'm a soldier slowly falling in this war.
In the streets where I dwell
you must always watch your back.
You must be ready for battle like the US and Iraq.
I tell myself why? What's the purpose of this madness?
In the end it hurts others
and puts my family through sadness.
People always tell me that I don't know wrong from right.
I can't stop striving for mines and won't stop shining bright.
In conclusion, I say forget those who disrespect and forget, those who oppose.
The reason why I do it is 'cause
that's just the life that I chose.

-Kermit

From The Beat: You told us you didn't want this to be a standout in our Beat pages. But forget a standout, this would've been a piece of the week. However, we understand why you wouldn't want to be put on front street. You compared the streets where you dwell to what's going on in Iraq. We liked that comparison so much that we thought we'd elaborate on that. What's going on in Iraq is totally unnecessary and could've been avoided. We tend to feel the same way about what goes on in the streets, but we don't think today's youth are aware of this because violence is overly exploited. We loved your rhyme, so we felt it deserved a response that was food for the mind.

I Just Don't Care

I hate wakin' up in the morning and seeing staff with a big smile on their faces. I just feel like woopin' their ass. I don't know why I think like this, but I think that I'm just a crazy person.

Maybe I just don't give a shhh about people.

Right now I feel like beatin' somebody's ass. But I'll just wait till I really snap. Beatin' somebody's ass brings out the anger in me. It feels really good. People should try it more often.

-Ruthless

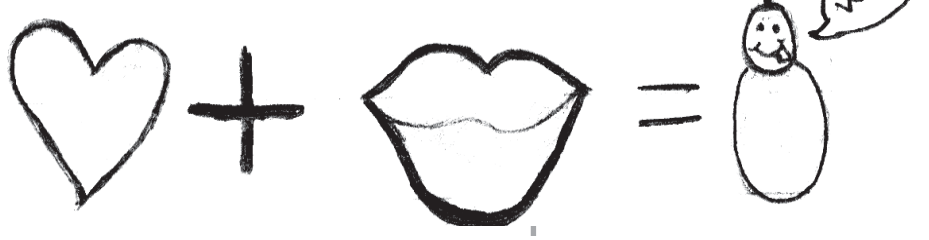
From The Beat: We don't think you're crazy for hating the smiles on staff's faces, but we bet that you also hate seeing frowns on their faces, too. In other words, we think what you hate is having someone looking over your every move, and it doesn't really matter if they're smiling or not. We even understand the feeling of wanting to lash out and hit someone, but we have to say that if you indulge that feeling, you may have a short-term "feel good" release, but in the long term, that feeling will be replaced when even more powerful "staff" take over the decision-making function that only free people can exercise. If you can "wait" to act on that feeling while you're here, then you can use those skills to avoid snapping when you're on the outs — and avoid putting yourself right back in that situation you hate.

God Forgive Me

God forgive me.
These ninjas want me deceased
But like the door of the oven I'm packin' heat
And the only time I get hit is when I sleep
Ninjas want my life on the streets and in my dreams
Why you have to take my dogs at a young age?
I know it's yo' decision but you gotta feel my pain
It ain't nothin' else in our future but to push 'caine
But you gotta forgive me

-Thinzel Washington

From The Beat: Why should God forgive you, Thinzel. Do you really have a relationship with God? If so, is it a one-way street? Do you ask God for things (like forgiveness), but fail to hear what God is asking of you? What is the basis of forgiveness, and why do you want it? If God forgives you, does that put any responsibilities on your shoulders? If God doesn't, what then?



I Just Got Committed Yesterday

Yesterday I just got committed to a Juvenile Prison till I'm 18. I'm 16 now. Me and my man got caught up together. The one thing that's killing me is that the one person I love so much in my life is in jail and I ain't gonna be able to see him for a long time. Right now he's in the tents and will probably get 3 to 6 years in prison. He's my baby, I love him so much 'cause he's the one person who has ever loved me. I just can't wait till my time is up so I can write to him and be there for him.

He changed me for the better. I stayed loyal to him and he was loyal to me. I don't feel whole when I'm away from him because I'm so used to him being by my side. He's become part of me. Here goes my poem to him. (Dedicated to Myron)

You're the one I love the most
With my feelings inside you're what gives me hope
Even though I'm locked up you keep me strong
Your love to me is what kept me off the G-bong
You kept me from harm and away from the streets
I gave you my heart and you received
I want you to know that I'll wait for you
Because no amount of time can break love that's true.

-Sara

From The Beat: Sounds like the two of you are dedicated to each other, but what led you to do something that put both of you in jail. What kind of love is that, Bonnie and Clyde? We don't mean to hate, but that if you're truly in love, you should know that you can't be together in jail. If he was helping you be a better person, what was he doing committing a crime with you?

What Makes Me Smile

The thing that makes me smile is seeing and talking to my dad or brother. They mean everything to me in my life.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: That's good that you have a family that cares for you and you care about them back. We hope you'll be free soon and will be able to tell them this in person, instead of writing to us from your room.

Life Lie

Things I see are not what they should be
People I know are as fake as politicians
My life is a lie that I can't escape
I try to run but get caught every time
It's a game of cat and mouse
My cheese is my downfall
The lie follows shortly after, when all is done
Waiting for it to catch up is my hell
I don't have to wait long
I'm coming after that lie with my hatchet high
Swinging it to and fro through the jungle of time
Getting closer to it so I can face it sooner
When I get it down to slay it then I'll be free
Until then I will sit and wait for my time

-Sma

From The Beat: You say your life is a lie, so how are you going to make it the truth? Can the game of cat and mouse change into a positive one? For although cheese is your downfall, a young mouse like you needs it to survive. So, how can you get your cheese without making it your downfall?

My Family Makes Me Smile

What makes me smile is my mom, my dad, my brothers and sisters, my family, my friends. What makes me smile is my boyfriend, Michael.

What makes me happy, too, is being in the outs with everyone just kickin' it. The most thing that make me smile is the love I have for people and the love they have for me.

-Irene

From The Beat: You better get out and spend some time with those people that you care about and that care for you. You shouldn't be missing them and being inside that room. What do you need to change to be with those you love?

What Makes You Smile

The one thing that makes me smile the most is my boyfriend. Every time I talk to him I smile. Just hearing his voice and hearing him say he loved me makes my whole day. Knowing I can count on him and trust him to be there puts a smile on my face. Thinking of spending the rest of my life with him and knowing I'm goin' to have his kid makes me smile. The thing that makes me smile and always will is my baby boy, Joseph.

-Ashley

From The Beat: It's good that you are in a relationship that has trust, but staying outta jail will you help you two love each other even more. You need to stay out the halls so you can have a healthy kid. What do you need to do to handle your business and get system-free?

If I Could Go Back

I wish I could go back in time. If I could go back in time I wouldn't do what I did, taking somebody's car, not even knowing whose car it is. Making my mom suffer 'cause of me.

I feel like just this: First, coming to jail ruined my life. It ruined my life 'cause I messed up my relationship with my family and my life. That's all I got to say.

-Pedro

From The Beat: We appreciate that you regret what you've done, but we don't think you've ruined your whole life. Hopefully this is a wake-up call and you won't make the same mistake again. Is there anything besides jail that you would go back and change? Would you have wanted to be raised the way you were raised? If so, why? If not, how would you have wanted to be raised?

My Dreams

My name is Vicky and I do have a dream. My dream is to have a good life by being drug free. My family has a record of being locked up. Most of my family hasn't passed the tenth grade.

I'm trying really hard not to mess up. I already got a PO. I am locked up at the moment, but I take full responsibility for my actions. I try not to get in trouble while I'm in here. I hate being in my room. All I do is pray to get out, and one day God will answer my prayers, but 'till then I will wait.

-Vicky

From The Beat: If all your dreams are like the one you just described to us here, then we hope you dream often. What was your drug of choice? How did you get involved with drugs? Do you think you have the power to get out and stay clean? What do you think is going to be your biggest obstacle in the quest to remain sober? How will you handle this roadblock?

Dreams

You dream, but do you expect the dream to live on? But one dream can never be what you want to live. I can dream of what I always wanted to be and still dream about stuff I will always want to be.

The dream you have, you may like it. But the next dream you have, you will love. You dream every night and every day is different, so stick to your dream and live your dream.

-Mendez

From The Beat: We can tell that those words came from a place of wisdom. But now we want to know what you dream about. Are you going to stick to that dream? How? Hopefully you know what your dreams are, you know how to stick to them, and you have the ability to stick to them. For we hate to see someone wasting their talent in jail.

Fun

What makes me smile is when I have fun with my friends and family, when I have a good day. Another thing that makes me smile is the thought of my mother's smile, because I love her so much. If I could do anything to make her happy, I would, so I wrote this poem.

Mommy
Mommy, mommy don't be scared.
I'll never ever make you dare.
Mommy, mommy I'll show you
That all my love is oh so true.
Mommy, mommy I love you.
So don't ever let me sniff that glue.
Mommy mommy it's so clear.
That you're my mommy oh so dear.
So never ever let me go
'Cause I don't want no more dough.

-Daughter

From The Beat: We're pretty sure your mom loved the poem that you wrote for her. You should give her a copy. But we bet that your mom would be much happier to see you out those country draws and at home chilling with her. So when you get out, think about your mom and how much she cares and loves you before you make a decision that might bring you back to the Halls.

My Piece

It's hard for me to see any of my family members in prison. I miss them. Like my cousin is in prison doing ten years, and me and him were real close together, always went to parties, the mall, and just chilled.

It's hard 'cause you get orders from somebody every day, can't go to the fridge and get anything you want to eat, and you're always in a jail cell thinking and thinking about the future.

Where would you be ten years from now? Or will everybody forget about you? Your friends, your girls, and sometimes even your family will. So it's real hard here. Even people stress about Durango over getting months, so how do you think people feel when they get years in prsion? Fighting every day and being bored all day.

-Ricardo

From The Beat: It must be hard to deal with the fact that you have close family members who've fallen into the arms of incarceration. Do you think that people are more likely to get locked up if they have family members who are locked up? Why do you think this is? How do you feel about people in prison getting years, fighting every day, and being bored?

My Life's A Game . . .

My life is useless.
I feel I am powerless.
My dad left and didn't look back.
When I say left, I mean he didn't even care
to leave a trace on this hell we call earth.
My dad got played and my mom was the player.
She played the game, now I'm left to finish it.
My life's a mess; I don't know how I plan to fix it.
I'm blessed to have my grandparents
It seems they're all I have left.
My sisters fight over the same dude
and wonder why they're going through so much stuff.
I wonder why God showed me a life like this.
I live my life to tell messed up things like this
You think you got it bad,
you haven't heard the beginning of it.
My life's a game, if you truly want to play it,
be the next to step up.

-Gueda

From The Beat: You weren't lying when you said you've been through a lot. But you must be doing something right because you've lasted this long. How have you survived through all the madness? What advice could you give others to help them go through their problems? We know that things can only get better from here. So keep your head up like you've been doing a wait for the good times.

A Poem

When he was at the park he got a bullet wound.
The weather was clear and nice.
Someone filmed it.
People's eyes were on him.
He turned and looked at the clock.
His wife was in the garden now with her little team.
From city to city, a million people were covered with blood.

-Esequiel

From The Beat: This is a powerful poem. We've known you for a long time Esequiel. We're so glad that you're writing for us. You used to resist it. What's happened? Why the change of heart? We're glad of it.

Seems Like A Long Time

Seems like a long time since I got to go to my homie's and my grandma's and my dad's gravesites to pay my respects to them.

But I think of them daily and pray for them at night. May they rest in peace.

-Esequiel

From The Beat: It's good to keep your loved ones in mind. Love is the glue that holds the world together, and holds our lives together. In moments of temptation, don't forget about the power of love.

Regrets

I regret what I did, or what I'll do to get myself in gangs. I don't regret being a brown Chicana. I regret walking down my vario and bumbling into the homeboys.

I regret that I was at the wrong place at the wrong time. I don't regret being all flamed up in my vario. But I still regret so many things.

-S

From The Beat: Did being "all flamed up" have anything to do with being "in the wrong place at the wrong time"? Think about it.

I Love It When...

I love it when I see my lady when I haven't seen her for a long time. I also love it when I'm out of these damn walls and when I don't come back for a long time, or at least a couple of years. Anyways, my life is lovely and I'm not going to change it, 'cause I love it.

You can love everything as long as you're positive and honest about reality and not fake about your personality.

-Jaime

From The Beat: You really do sound positive. How'd you end up in the Hall? Is there some small part of your life, or your behavior, that you're overlooking? Even once every few years is too often to come to the Hall, isn't it?

Rather Be Home

I would like to be home than here. I'd rather be at my house doing something, instead of wasting my time here.

I could be helping out. I could also be playing sports. I love being free. I hate being locked in a room.

-Oscar

From The Beat: When you get back to the outs, don't forget what it's like in the Hall. Remember it especially when you're tempted to do something that could threaten your freedom.

How Have I Changed?

I have changed a lot. I have been locked up and gotten out, and locked up one more time. But this time I screwed up good.

I have been here for five months. It's been bad times after bad times. But the time has come where I could go on to bigger and badder places. It's time for me to stop screwing around and to go home. That would be a good start for me.

I have to go on and stay out of it all. This kind of stuff could get me locked up in the pen, or someplace like that. So I have to change a lot more. But it's all good, for the time being. It's time for change.

-David

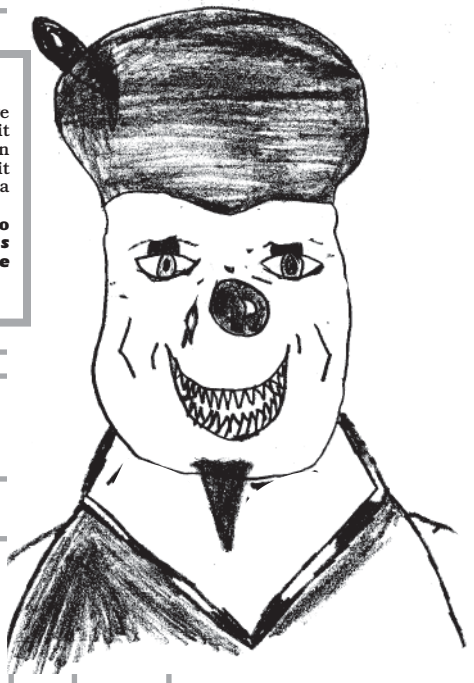
From The Beat: You said it David. You're getting serious now. You know what you have to do. If you are lucky, and get another chance, be very serious about how you spend your time. Go back to school. An education is a powerful tool. And you'll need all the tools you can get. Thanks for writing.

Things I Love

I love it when my mom cooks for me. I love it when she holds me in her arms. I love it when she washes my clothes. I love it when we go out together. And most of all I love it when I'm home with my family and having a good time and getting along good.

-Oso

From The Beat: Those are good things to love. Now, think about how you're going to keep it.



My Loves

I love it when I'm at my house kicking it with my friends and partying. I love listening to the radio and staying out of the hall. I want to go home with my family and eat some pizza, and go to the Mall and the Great America and ride the roller coaster. And I love going back to my pad and watching movies.

-Ricky

From The Beat: Ricky, we know you love those things. But you have to love freedom, too, and you've been in the system for quite a while. If you want pizzas and roller coasters and videos, start paying attention to the reason you're locked up.

The Outs

I love it when I am on the outs. I have freedom and I take advantage of every bit of it, too. I can do whatever I want. I can wear what ever I want. And I don't have to ask permission about every move I make.

I hate it while I'm in here. All the freedom I love is taken away from me. I just think about how I miss doing whatever I want to do whenever I want to do it. The thing I hate most while I am in here is when it is decided for me when to go to bed. It is way early and I just stay up staring at the wall, thinking of when I am going to get out.

Everyday I look forward to my court date so I can be on the outs again.

-Erica

From The Beat: When you're in your locked room, staring at the wall, focus your attention on what you need to do to stay out of locked rooms, staring at walls. Figure that out and you'll have that freedom you love.

Another Day, Another Program

My mom is trying to lock my tail up in another freakin' program. Let me tell you — that's one way to push your kid away, for sure. The tables have turned. Now my dad seems to be the only one helping me out.

Sure, it's easy to pawn me off to programs and group homes. But what the heck, how can she send her own kid off again, just because it's easier. That's screwed. She's already shipped me off to Salt Lake for 22 months and to countless programs here in Santa Cruz. Heck with that. I'm not gonna let her ship me off again.

If I get put on the monitor I'm going to prove that I don't need to be shipped off again.

-Cherie

From The Beat: Maybe your mom has been waiting for that proof, been waiting for you to take some initiative. See what happens if you play the game straight and succeed. Give it a try. Everyone wins if you do that, and we bet your mom's attitude will change.

I hate it while I'm in here. All the freedom I love is taken away from me.

Anywhere But Here

I love it when I'm not in here. In here, I am a prisoner. When I am on the outs I can do, wear and eat what I want to.

I can't stand it in here when people are telling me what to do. I just wish I could be out there with my homies, kicking it. But I'm not doing that.

-Sadie

From The Beat: No, you're not. And it sounds to us as if your freedom is very important to you. When you get, guard your freedom. Earn it. Keep it.

weekly writings

Life Is Tough!

Life is hard for me. The reason why is because my life is not in my own hands. My PO is making all of my life decisions. My mom doesn't want me home any more. I was one day to the house and she said that I could not come home anymore. I am in a program that tells me when to eat, sleep, shhh and where I can go. I just want one chance so I can prove them wrong. Life is tough!

-Johnnie

From The Beat: Life can be really tough, Johnnie. One of the shocks of going to Juvy is to realize that you no longer have much control over your decisions. Does that cause you to appreciate the freedom you had? Is there anything you can do to help your mother learn to trust you again? It's on you to convince her that if she ever lets you back home, you won't mess up, threaten her peace, etc. Are you ready to live by your mom's conditions? If so, can you tell her and somehow show her you appreciate her and the home she has provided for you so far?

Not Good Or Bad

I think we're born addicted to drugs, not good or bad. Our behaviors are learned from the older people in our lives. If you have positive parents teaching you positive things, and how to deal with problems in a good way, then you're bound to be positive. If it's negative, you're bound to be negative.

For me, I was taught a lot of negative things and now it's real hard to reverse those things into positive things. I know that's possible with my higher power, who is God.

-Paul

From The Beat: It is possible ≠≠— not easy, but possible — to overcome the negative things people have taught you, Paul. Do you still live with people who have a negative influence on you on the outs? Can you learn from teachers, friends, family who are positive? Maybe you can influence the negative people in your life to have a positive attitude like you have.

Evil Already Structured In Me

I was born with a destiny
With the evil already structured in me
To fulfill the prophecy
Of me being a "CT"
But, then I took another turn
I learned the right way
Now I'm in my new days
I closed the gates
Of the sandbaggin' days
Now I hold another faith in me
But until I die
I'll have the evil in me

-Merced

From The Beat: How did the evil get into you, Merced? Who influenced you in any evil ways you may have? What's a "CT"? How did you learn the right way? Which power has more influence over you, good or evil? Can you fight the evil and keep it away from you, if you want to? Can you get rid of the evil all together? Do you think that all people — all of us — have both good and evil inside? How does choice determine which defines us at any given moment?

Why Won't Anyone Listen?

Yes, many times I'm scared and alone, and sad. No, I just talk to myself. I don't know. You can talk to yourself or someone new.

-Kevin

From The Beat: Sometimes, when you're really sad or depressed, it can seem like talking to anyone is meaningless, since they can't feel nor know your pain. Then you can feel you're just talking to yourself over and over, and giving yourself all the answers, which can feel just as useless. Is that how you feel? Do you have anyone you can go to, when you're scared and alone? Who? How do they help you? Does writing help any?

Born Addicted... Born An Accident

When I was born, I was born to heroin. My mom was a prostitute, so she didn't know who my father was. Born an addict, born an accident — that's me, Shawn. Before, when I first took my first hit of some weed, I was already addicted, so the door was cracked open, but when I got high, the door was fully open.

I really can't tell you how these two events have affected me, but I am working on it in therapy and at Walden House. I hope to find out how it has affected me, so that I can stop it for someone else who had the same problem.

-Shawn

From The Beat: Your life started off with some uneven odds. But just as surely as you have done things in your life to help someone else, even something as simple as giving a bum a dollar, you have demonstrated the power you have to determine what you want and how you want your life to be, despite the addictions you were exposed to. Your birth was no accident; an accident is coloring outside the lines. Having a child and all that entails — nine months of pregnancy, changing diapers and more is hardly an accident. That is something a mother consciously decides she wants to do. You have that same consciousness. Determine your own future, young homie.

Why?

Why do I make the decisions I make?
Why do I take all the risks I take?
What did I do to get where I am today?
Why do I cry?
Why do I lie to myself?
Why do I try?
I lived in a small town
But I grew up fast
You could say what you want
I don't regret my past
If I could go back
Would I change what I did?
Would I change my ways
When I was just a little kid?
Or is it just talk
Would I crawl
Before I walk?
Learn my ABCs
Before my XYZs
I stand back and ask
Where do I stand?
'Cause I try so hard
To do everything I can

-Nathan

From The Beat: Right on Nathan, this is a smooth flow that we are definitely feeling. So what does doing everything you can mean? We hope that means getting your priorities and plans for the future all worked out. You know we got to crawl before we walk, think before we speak and plan before we do.

I Look Forward To...

I look forward to tomorrow
I look forward to today
I look forward to next year
I look forward to skating on Sunday
I look forward to seeing my mother.
I look forward to seeing my girl, and brother
I look forward to seeing my depression disappear
I look forward to seeing my sadness fade away
I look forward to seeing my love for Rosie sprout

-Kevin

From The Beat: What deep down do you think is causing your sadness and depression, Kevin? Will becoming free again make a difference on how you feel? Are you sad and depressed on the outs? How can your mom, brother and Rosie help you? Where do you skate on Sunday? When you're free, do you still write? What do you like to write for yourself?

What Are We Even Here For?

I look forward to the day this world ends. I say this because I really see no meaning to this world. One out of every ten people really do make it good in this world. I feel like if only that one person makes it, then those nine have to suffer. More people die than live. More people are poor than rich.

I don't understand what we are even here for. I really do think that somebody should just lay a big atomic bomb on this world. No more suffering, no more poverty, no more imprisonment.

-Shawn

From The Beat: One of the mysteries of life is that there may not be any basic meaning to life — there may only be the meaning each person feels toward life. If there were no more people on earth, would life still have meaning? Maybe you have to ask yourself, like we all do, what does life mean to you? Who do you love? What makes you happy? What are you proud of about your life so far? What/who has value to you? What do you hope your life will be in the future? Oh yeah, more people live than die, that is why the human race has increased over the years rather than decreased and even though there are more poor people than rich people, some of the greatest contributors to human advancement have been poor. If all men are not quite created equal, as Jefferson wrote, at least we know we all end equal: dead. So why hurry a process that is inevitable and universal?

I Might Go To College

I'm looking forward to getting my GED while I'm at Walden House and going into a drug treatment program, so I can succeed in life. Then I want to go home and get a job. Then, after a year or so, I might go to college and further my education.

-Daniel

From The Beat: It sounds all good, Daniel. But why wait a year or two to get into college? You know what they say, the sooner begun the sooner done. What do you hope to learn in college? Do you think if you work hard, you can earn whatever you want, need?

Born To Be Wild or Good?

Yes, very much so. Don't know if it's inherent. Neither, I guess. Charles Manson was not born evil, that's just the path he chose. Mother Teresa was on the right/good path.

I was born not as good or bad, just neutral, I guess. Yes, they become how they are through experience, environment, what they are taught, just born, neither.

-Kevin

From The Beat: When you write for The Beat, we want you to do more than just answer the questions. Those questions are there to help you think about the subject, not to be answered like questions in a test. Just write what you feel. You did just that when you said you were not born good or bad, just neutral. We agree. We are all pretty much born neutral. It is what we are exposed to as kids that molds and influences our character. As we mature some of us become more conscious of the power we have in reshaping our mentalities and overcoming the weaknesses that have held us down and gotten us in trouble. Have you exercised that power yet?

I'm Out In Two Months

Wut up, Beat Within? This Phu Guy. Walden House was weak until I moved up to TC phase. Now I got my privileges. Now I can start doing my program. Man, I'm tired. I don't want to write no more.

-Phu Guy

From The Beat: It's good that you have the patience to get your privileges, and let Walden House's program help you, Phu Guy — because we sure don't want to see you back in YGC. What kind of help do you think would do you the most good? Who do you have to help you? Family? Friends? How do you let them know you need their help?

If you have positive parents teaching you positive things, and how to deal with problems in a good way, then you're bound to be positive.

Water

I want to hit that crystal
Tha stuff that make my life miserable
I love it when it hits my brain
But I hate it when it makes me insane
It's been 3 1/2 years; it's too hard to change
I want that water
I think I need it like no otha… sorta,
But with it… I know life can't go furtha
It runs through my head every time I'm down
It drives me crazy… as it sounds,
But it's weird how I keep going back
To the same ol' water attack
I wanna know, wassup wit' that.

-Lil' Mami

From The Beat: It's called a cycle. We know it's messed up yet we go back and do the same shhh. We all do this at one point or another in our lives. Change is hard but you have to tell yourself: "Nothing is stronger than me."

Trees

You better believe
It's this here leaves
That carry the key
To straight stress relief
Cannabis is bliss and all I need to be at ease
Strawberry Swishers and a fat bag of weed
The High Times magazine is all I read
I got a trick up my sleeve
Pull licks to get these trees
Choke 'cause the smoke is all I breathe
Sprinkle me with Hashish
Burry the blunt with keef
Forget the rent
It's 100% percent THC.

-Jackie

From The Beat: If you keep smoking them blunts, your growth it will stunt. If you want stress relief, you need to get some sleep and find a way to get away from the trees.

My Dude

I look forward to being with my boyfriend, looking into his eyes all day long, holding his hand while walking through the park, yelling his name in the middle of the night…kissing his neck and rubbing his back, and running my fingers down his smooth, muscular chest.

-Guera

From The Beat: Is he as nice to you as you are to him? How does he make you feel special?

Funk

We were all on the block, posted up like a team in Marin, until my cousin hit the block and said there are some ninjas from San Francisco at Burger King, so I went down there on my go-ped to see if he was fo' real.

When I got down there, they were ten deep posted, so I went back to da' block and lied to everybody and said they muggin' and talkin' smack, so everybody went down there. On the way down there, I said it ain't gonna be no talkin' just take off.

We got down there and my boy said, "Which one of them ninjas was muggin' my little ninjas?" Nobody said nuthin', so I said, "Man, I didn't come here for no reason," and took off. They got up and we surrounded them, but nobody didn't take off, so I hit one of them with a napkin holder and he dropped. Then, we started fightin'.

-Young Braun

From The Beat: So you one of them people that likes to start the funk. You think you hard, huh? Just watch out, there's always someone two steps ahead of you. You see what happens on the news to youngsters who wanna be hard like you. So be careful. Life is real.

Free Me!

When I was on the outs, I was usually on run. I lived my life by not caring about what I did. After all the times I've been locked up, I still never cared. They sent me to placement, but I took off.

Now I'm at my last straw and waiting to get transferred. All that time I wasted, I regret 'cause now I'd do anything to be free.

-Mikey

From The Beat: How can you make your time spent in the Hall productive? What can you do to catch up with the things that passed you by in the past?

Eighteen Months

I've been locked-up eighteen months and stuff changed. I miss my mom and my brother really bad. I leave next month to go back to New York to live with my mom and my aunt in the Bronx.

I want to go back to Harlem when I turn eighteen on October 10th. I'ma be really happy when I hit my stomping grounds and get with my old boys 'cause I never got in trouble in New York.

-Smurf

From The Beat: What is the biggest difference between living on the east coast and living on the west coast? Which coast has a better education system?

Dear DA

I'm out of here on the 22nd of August and on the probation Rolex (bracelet monitor).

I'm gonna meet hella fools in my life that are going to try and help me, but all they're trying to do is put me back here, so to all that are going to help me, screw you I'm not going to let you take me back alive so I'm going to not do anything wrong or get caught, so I'm going to get on your nerves

Hella bad. I'm going to make you go crazy trying to get something on my record.

-Dak

From The Beat: Right on! The best revenge is success! Don't give them the satisfaction of being a product of the system.

Rollas Beat Me Something Crucial

I drank some Hypnotiq and Hennessy at my high school and I fell over and busted my chin. Then I fought five cops and they beat me down with their sticks, and then sent me to the hospital.

I was there for ten hours and then they took me to the Hall.

-Saint

From The Beat: That sucks. What do you think should be done about police brutality?

I regret all the stuff I did 'cause now I'm locked up

I Hate It When...

I hate it when I can't talk to my girl
I hate it when I can't kiss and have sex with my girl
I hate it when I can't kick it with my homeboys
I hate it when I can't see my mom or my sister
I hate it when people tell me what to do
I hate it when people talk smack and don't do anything.

-Blacky

From The Beat: It seems that everything out in the free world is what you want and need and the things you dislike are a component of being locked up. We think you know hat to do.

Out Of Here

I look forward to getting out of the Hall soon and getting myself a job so I can stay out.

Also, get myself a pretty girl and be with my family.

-Neon

From The Beat: What kind of job are you looking for? What are the qualities that you're searching for in a girl?

Outside

I wish I was outside of the fence and these walls.
I wish I was outside of my room.
I wish I was outside of the thug mind I have.
I wish I was outside of the Hall.

-Neon

From The Beat: Don't just wish — do something about it! What are the steps you need to take to attain this goal?

I live day-by-day doing what I need to I believe in faith

I've Changed

When I was on the outs, I did anything and everything to make money, hitting licks all day everyday, and pounds of weed, and ounces of other shhh, and staying on the run with my playboys.

But I regret all the stuff I did 'cause now I'm locked up, and when I get out I'm going to make money the right way.

-Brandon

From The Beat: What will be your first step towards making money the legit way? How are you going to go about getting your life together and righting the wrong?

About Me

I don't believe in good or bad
I don't believe in short or tall
I live day-by-day doing what I need to
I believe in faith
Everybody on this planet has a path
It's the direction of the path
Where people get lost
For me, I'm at an intersection
I'm at a stoplight
I can only go right on the red.

-Trevor

From The Beat: Good luck. How can you make sure that your next move is your best move? If you always go right — you'll never go wrong.

Desire

My desire to be with breezies that ain't liars
My desire, smokin' weed gettin' higher and higher
My desire for Lexus's, Mercedes rollin' down the street with pretty ladies
My desire for San Francisco baby!

-E-Bunny

From The Beat: We hope your desire for the things that set you on fire will inspire you to go for the gold and higher. But first you have to get out of the Hall and stop calling women breezies or none of this can transpire fo' sheezy!

welcome to the Beat without

SMOKIE ***What a juicy piece you are about to read! This young writer's skills are excellent! Given we have worked with Smokie for a minute, we truly have seen this young writer come such a long way. This next piece found it's way via outside the workshops in Juvenile Hall. With that said Smokie should be proud of his skills and talents, and keep pushing himself as a writer and storyteller! Anyhow, this piece takes us on a crazy journey through the hood, through a gang related shoot out and all. And then we're left hangin', breathlessly waiting for the conclusion in the next Beat, or at least for part 2. This piece definitely shares the tragic side of the homies in the hood - The deaths, the fear, the trippin', and ultimately the incarceration and pain suffered by all. Anyhow, bring on the rest, you have our attention. Today Smokie begins his program at ROP in Nevada.***

A Walk Through The Park (Part 1)

Author's note:
This story you're about to read is coming straight from my life. I have to admit many things have been changed and added, but realize it's an everyday scenario for many people in here. Sit back and enjoy! Be ready for the ending in next week's Beat. I'm not trying to promote this lifestyle, but try and realize how this world is today! Late.

While walking through the neighborhood park, Jose, a short Mexican-American who everyone called Dimples (because of his big dimples) noticed a bunch of homies, chillin' at the benches. It appeared to be almost the whole 'hood, and Jose started to think, "Was there a meeting today? Without hesitation he headed toward the homies. When the homies noticed him, they all got quiet. So when he reached them, he asked, "Hey, what's up, homeboys? Is there a meeting today?"

Then one of the OGs named Smokie said, "Yeah, there's a meeting and it's about you!"

"About me?" said Jose.

"Yeah, about you," said Smokie. "We're thinking about dropping you, 'cause of your age, homes. You're too young to be gangbangin!"

"What are you talking about?" said Jose. "I put in as much work as you. Why should I be getting dropped?"

"Ah, homes, don't trip. We'll let you know what our decision is," said Smokie.

"That's messed up homes," said Jose.

So as Jose leaves the area, the homies get back to what they were doing. "So what do you think, Smokes?" asked Tank.

"Ah, homes, I don't know. He's too young. I don't want him ending up like me."

While Jose is walking to the other side of the benches, he hears some music that sounds out of place. He then realizes it's rivals! So, knowing they're trespassing, he goes to put them in their place. Being only a young teen and the rest of the homies being in their early twenties, he feels he has nothing to fear, because he's carrying his tech nine with two clips.

As he reaches the spot where the music is playing, he notices that there's only two fools. They can't see him, because he's hiding behind a tree. While standing behind the tree, he gets to thinking, "The last time they came, they were at least six deep."

He then realizes the homeboys have noticed the rivals sitting in their car. While he's watching the homies come toward him, he notices that there's a lot of movement in the bushes behind them. He then realizes it's a setup! So he rushes towards the homies, while pulling out his nine, screaming, "It's a setup, homes! Watch out! Turn around!"

But they don't know what he means, so he starts blasting! Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam! He lets off four shots. That leaves him with four shots left in the clip, plus he still has another clip. He hears a scream," Ah, my leg! My leg! I'm shot!"

The homies finally realize what's going on and they pull all their straps out and start blasting! There's so much commotion, the first two rivals don't know what to do. Jose, being the crazy fool he is, goes after the first two. He starts blastin'…Bam! Bam! Bam! One goes down, the other one starts to run, but it's too late. Bam! Bam! Gone!

Then, out of nowhere, 5.0 shows up! Smokie yells "Everyone split and meet at the spot in two hours! Dimples, come with me." So they flee the scene. They can hear the police right behind them, but they continue to hop fences, run through yards, and run as fast as they could. When they made it to a street, they jacked the first car on sight.

"Get out the car before I put one in your head!" said Smokie.

"Don't, please take it, just don't shoot me," said the driver.

After they pull him out the car, Smokie takes the wheel, but realizes it's a stick shift. "Forget it, homies, I can't drive this shhh. It's a stick!" said Smokie.

"Switch, I can drive this hoopty!" said Jose.

So they switch seats, and as soon as Jose gets in the driver's side, they hear cops shouting and the sirens from the squad car. Skeet! Skeet! They hit the corner and head for the highway. As soon as they get on the freeway, they're on a high-speed chase.

"Shhh it, homes. We gotta bail. What we gonna do? Where we gonna go?" asks Smokie.

"I got an idea. Let's lose this tail on the next exit and ditch this ride," said Jose. So as they hit the exit, they jumped out the car and hit the pavement. They both rolled fiercely across the rough pavement, scratching their clothes.

"Damn, homie. I messed up my gear!"said Smokie. "Let's go, homie, break to the store!" said Jose

As they run across the street towards the store, they can hear the sirens close by. When they enter the store, they are happy to see it's a Sears. Trying to act normal, Smokie says to Jose, "Ah, homes, let's go change our clothes and get cleaned up." So they head to the men's section and find the Ben Davises. They both grab a pair of pants. Smokie grabs some gray pants and Jose grabs some black ones. Then they go looking for some shirts. Smokie grabs a Ben Davis working shirt to match his pants. Jose, on the other hand, gets a Pendleton. They start to transfer everything from the old pants to the new ones. Then they change. When they were finished, they started for the door.

The whole time everything has been happening, all the way back to the gang shooting, both Smokie and Jose were wearing black leather gloves, so there isn't a trace of fingerprints. When they get outside, they discard their gloves and throw them away. Before they know it, there's five cop cars right in front of them. Jose whispers to Smokie, "What do we do?"

Before Smokie can answer, the police are rushing towards them. But they aren't after them, they go rushing into the store. After all the cops were inside, Smokie and Jose broke to the liquor store across the street. Then Smokie says, "That was a really close call. I thought we were screwed."

Then Jose says, "Let's call Tank and get the hell out of here." So Smokie calls Tank on his cell and tells him where they're at. Within fifteen minutes Tank pulled up in a 2004 Escalade, sitting on 20-inch rims with spinners. It was painted black with tinted windows, and fully loaded with a radio system. Without hesitation, they hop in and bounce out from the hot spot.

Tank then asks, "How y'all get away wit' all these cops around?"

"We almost got snatched up, but we changed our gear and the cops went right past us."

"Damn, homes, that's a trip."

While driving they decide to stop at the weed man's house and get an ounce of some chronic marijuana. They all put in, so it really isn't that expensive. After getting the weed and smoking a few blunts, they decide to call it a night.

Everyone goes their separate ways, but the one who is tripping is Jose. He's thinking that it was too easy to get away. He tries to forget it all happened. He then gets home and goes straight to his room. He decides to take a nice warm shower. After the shower, he hears a loud knock at the door, like it's the police. Luckily his parents are usually never home. So he puts on his pants and shirt and grabs his tec. He gets to the door and asks, "Who is it?"

Then a scratchy voice answers, "It's me. Let me in!" And the person on the outside of the door starts banging on the door like a crack head.

"Stop bangin' on the door and tell me who you are!"

"Just open the door and you'll find out who I am!" said the man. So with tec in hand, Jose opens the door, brandishing his strap. (To be continued…)

"Stop bangin' on the door and tell me who you are!"

"Just open the door and you'll find out who I am!"

DAVID SANTOS *We would like to welcome David Santos to our pages of The Beat Without. David was referred to us by fellow BWO writer Eugene Weems, which we are grateful for. David delivers two poems this week, one paying tribute to his love, and the other speaks about the pains of incarceration. David Santos writes us from Salinas Valley State Prison.*

What We Don't Know, Has Already Hurt Us

Mentally stimulated
by the things which 'cause so much pain and heartache
to so many.
Born in a land that is derived on pain and suffering,
continuing the cycle that was set
by the men behind the scenes.
Killing my brothers and sisters,
be it directly, or indirectly,
living for sin,
but deep down fearing for passions and peace.
One's emotion bottled,
seemingly to never be released,
based on the mental entrapment placed upon so many
upon our arrival onto God's green earth.
Our young lured into questionable lifestyles,
by tainted hopes of love and false dreams of riches.
But instead becoming just another statistic to society
or yet another casualty to the game.
Eventually stripped of one's freedom, locked down
in a strange world designed to break those which it's walls contain
This underground world, this hidden university,
this modern day plantation.
Used to instill fear and hopelessness into the hearts and souls of its captures
Leaving consciousness as the only line of defense.
But what you don't know,
won't hurt you they teach us,
I wonder why?

I ain't the boy club or the rec center type so I went back to the streets and started my old ways. The streets accepted me and now they won't let go so that's how it is with me.

If You Only Knew How Much

What do you say to another year as one?
I think that mere words alone cannot express
the measure of what that means,
but to me, you are the sun and the moon
the stars and the clouds,
the good and the bad
it's been with you
that I've had my happiest moments,
and most loving experiences
and it's been with you
that I've shared my saddest days,
and most heartbreaking tragedies,
but we've come a long way from then,
and we've overcome so much,
and even when we separated fate and destiny,
patched things up
see, I don't exactly know the words to say,
but I hope you know I'm here to stay, and
that I appreciate every level of the love
we make, mentally, physically, and
spiritually babe.
Happy Anniversary Ashley Marie Santos

we've come a long way from then, and we've overcome so much

MICHAEL *Michael was once an intern in our office until one day — he stopped showing up. In the following piece, he writes about the circumstances he was facing in which he stopped showing up, however he failed to explain how he has taken responsibility or if he even has. This shows us that he still has plenty of growing to do and The Beat is here to help if he will let us. His piece talks about how he was going through so much and how easy it is to learn to get caught up in the game.*

It All Started When...

For me, it all started when I was 10. I wouldn't call it gangbanging then, but I was trying. I didn't have my first fight for the block till I was about 12 in the in the 7th grade. I got into the habit like most young people do play follow the leader. I see a friend do it so I did it. It went from that fight to jumping people one by one and fighting one by one. Now I'm 16 years old and I still do the same dumb shhh. Nothing has really changed over the years except that I haven't shot at or shot anyone.

People like my mom tell me this is not the life and it's should want to live, and I do listen and think about what they say but once I get back on the street with my friends and start shooting craps and doing what I was always doing what I always do I'm never going to be able to change my ways from bad to good.

When I first turned 15, that's when I actually got into the habit of robbing people. I always got away wit' it till one day I got caught. I was sent to Juvenile Hall and I stayed there for a month but going through the system and being on a daily schedule and showering with other boys, eating there nasty food still didn't wake me up to the fact I was doing the wrong thing. The lectures from dad, mom, Jack from the Omega Boys Club, teachers, and other family members went in one ear and out the other. I did manage to get a job with The Beat. The job kept me off the street and I was doing good but still young.

I was trying to be a so-called pimp and I happened to get someone pregnant. I didn't want to keep it so I had to go back and fourth to the clinic or whatever. But during the time I had to miss work and didn't call and I was fired. Once that was over I had nothing to keep me busy. I ain't the boy club or the rec center type so I went back to the streets and started my old ways. The streets accepted me and now they won't let go so that's how it is with me.

the beat without

DREAMER ***We welcome first time contributor Dreamer, who actually tackles our 9th Editorial Note Contest question. We're not sure when we received this essay, but we are honored to feature Dreamer's priceless thoughts in this issue, unfortunately his work did not make it into The Beat when we were hosting the writings of this contest, nevertheless, it's never too late to teach, especially on such an important question as was our contest question, "What have you done in your life that you wish you could have done differently?" So, lets find out what Dreamer thinks! Dreamer writes his amazing tale from the county jail in Sacramento County.***

Dear Beat

Here's a little something from me. My name is Dreamer, I'm a first time contributor to your magazine, not much of a writer, but I thought I could at least give it a try since you guys are kind enough to share your magazine with me.

I enjoy The Beat very much, thanks! Well, although this writing may not be a winner, I hope you enjoy it, nevertheless, and if somehow it does grace your pages, hopefully, somebody can get something out of it.

Siempre...

My answer is if I could change one thing and only one, it would be my decisions in life

I Wish

What have I done in my life that I wish I could have done differently? Hmmmmm....Well, there seems to be numerous answers to choose from, but if I were to focus solely on one, I would have to choose the most important one, which may most likely not just important only to me, but to many others as well.

My answer is if I could change one thing and only one, it would be my decisions in life, and my role as a father. I would choose this because I didn't accept my role the way I should have. I struggled to do what was right, but it seemed at the time that "to do wrong" was winning the battle between the two.

I was eighteen years young when I was told by my girlfriend that she was pregnant. We were both really excited, but didn't know what we should do, because we were both still youngsters in this world. The news was so great to hear when I first found out, I was talking to my lady on the phone via a collect call from the county jail.

I got arrested for allegations of assault with a deadly weapon and ended up dealing out to the charge for a nine-month term in the county, with a promise of no State prison at the outset. All it was, was reservations for a stay in the penitentiary if I violated any of the clauses in my probation, which to say the least, was extensive. I took the deal anyway to ensure that I would see my son see the light of day.

While I was doing this little nine–month thang, I started towards the right way by taking GED courses. I eventually passed all the necessary tests and was awarded with a GED certificate upon completion. It felt hella good to earn something as oppossed to hustling for it.

The county I was at didn't provide much more programs other than that, but I continued to better myself by delving into the Bible every now and again. By doing so, it helped me build a positive conscious outlook on life.

I was released to the streets sometime in August of "2000" with my son's due-date right around the corner. I was anxious for my son to make his appearance into this life, although I knew this place was filled with so much pain. I want to see what kind of beauty could come from me, (a troubled man). I landed a job shortly after my release. I was off to a good start.

About a couple weeks after I started my job, I ran into some of the homies from the 'hood who were doing their thang "ballin" on some meth. The homies knew I could push it because that was my thang. That's how I used to pull my paper in. I never worked. I used to laugh at the thought, but times change and I was doing something for somebody else for a change, (my son).

Anyway, ol' boy through his pitch at me to try to get me on the team and his words sounded pretty good, although I knew there wasulterior motives to the offer.

He said, "yeah bro', you got your son who's gonna be born soon. He's gonna need things because you know babies be growing-out of clothes quick and also out of pampers. That kind of stuff will break you if you're money ain't right."

There was truth to what he said because anyone with a baby can relate to that. Everyone wants to spoil their children and keep them happy, but the job where I was at working paid me $9.00 an hour. That wasn't going to support no baby.

I was already living at an apartment with me, my lady, and her mom. The baby would sleep with us in our room, but sooner or later we would grow out of that space. I needed to stack some paper to make things happen for me and my new family, so I accepted his offer and started to push.

My son was born on October 2000, 7 lbs. 10 oz., a gorgeous, baby boy. I never thought I had it in me to make something as beautiful as what came from my girl.

One weekend after my son saw the light of day, two weeks to be exact, I went to a party. Before leaving the party that night, I got in a fight that lead to me getting jumped and stabbed. The stab wasn't too sexy at all. It went six inches deep and was done by a three inch wide blade. I was pouring blood out the side of my back. I tried to cover the wound and put some pressure on it, but my friends just kept going inside me. I got lucky and somebody picked me up on the street.

I struggled to stay coherent, but soon passed out due to blood lost. I leaked blood all over these guys' car. I felt hella bad, but was happy because I wouldn't of made it without them. They took me to the hospital where some doctors worked on me and stopped the bleeding.

After a few bags of blood and some rest, I woke-up feeling like garbage. I did a little time there at the hospital, and after a minute, I was released.

I was ordered not to work for a couple months by the doctor. When I talked to my boss, he assured me he would hold my spot.

I tried to apply for Workman's Compensation, but that wasn't going down.

After that I tried to apply for Food Stamps with my girlfriend, but we were denied by them, too.

Things weren't going cool. I was pushing a little and had money, but that wasn't my main source. It was just money to get some extra. The only thing left for me to do was hustle hard, or at least that's what I felt, so that's what I did. I took to the streets and

continued on next page

DREAMER (CONT.)

continued from previous page

extended out to all clientele.

I now knew the money started to come in and my son was getting spoiled, but with the long hours on the block trying to get the product sold, came some big obstacles. It was putting a strain on my relationship with my girl. We had money, but she wanted me. I felt like I had an obligation to provide for my family, so that's what I continued to do, (slang). Nothing got better, it just got worse. She was hella mad that I was never there. She gave me an ultimatum, she told me to stop pushing or get to pushing.

I chose to keep grinding because I didn't see money coming from anywhere else. I wasn't looking too good either.

After the couple months were up from my doctor's order, I went back to work. Things didn't seem to go good at work, either. Due to my job being at a mobile home manufacturer, which was all physical work, and my injury was not fully healed and it hurt to move around like I was expected to, I eventually quit.

All the pain for the menial wages was not worth it. I could make my paycheck in a couple minutes with drugs was my thought.

I never stopped long enough to feel the affects that were taking place inside myself due to my acts and choices. I just expected everything to get better, though it never did.

The only thing that I did provide for my son was the food and pampers, clothes, toys, etc., but I was lacking in the one thing that mattered most and that was providing for him with emotional love.

Sure, the other stuff was cool, but I know now that he needed me there with him each day to play with him, hold him, pamper him, sing to him, and just love him all together. Material things aren't long-lasting, but love is. Love will affect a child his whole life. It will make or break a kid.

Some may say material things can do the same, but I disagree because I am positive that it doesn't. I can have all the material things in the world, but if I didn't have love, I wouldn't have anything. Without love nothing really matters. My role as a father, as well as everyone else's, puts us in the best and most important position to our children. Their future relies on us to show them the way. Our love to our children makes us that way.

To all the fathers out there, we need to love our children, be there with them. We need to base our decisions on making sure that they benefit from them and not only us. They need to become first and us last. We need to set the example for them and what better way to do that than with love?

The way I would change this if I could do it all over again, it would be when I was first released. I would have continued my education going to a community college and seek a job, which I could've gotten with my father that would have enabled me to work "3" 12 hour days a week, and "4" hr. days the next. That goes back and forth during the month between the "3" days to the "4".

On the days I would have off, I would try to schedule my school on those days, so I could spend time with my son and girlfriend giving them both the time and love they both deserve so much. I would also encourage my girlfriend to take some college classes, so when my son is big enough, and he starts school, she would be able to work during that time he is in school and get off work right around the same time he would from school.

The ultimate goal would be to set an example for my son and give him all the love he needs to grow and flourish. The work and school would be an example of responsibility and dedication to him and would also, down the road, make it so me and my girl could provide a better living environment for him and hopefully have brothers and sisters for him. Being able to have time with my son, I could teach him different things and create a solid bond with him.

If I could, I wouldn't have chosen to sell drugs. The only "friends" I would keep would be my family members. I hope that what I was doing can be an example to other people from my 'hood. Also, not only just to them, but to others who disregard what's most important for the paper chase because our children and lovely ladies deserve more attention than the money does.

I'll conclude this writing piece with this.... "Our children are the future." As it was said before, I believe this to be true in its entirety: "All of us, fathers, have a responsibility that all of us should uphold, no matter what. There is no reason to overlook our young ones. They rely on us. Each child is a blessing. We can build a better future by, and through, our babies. We must raise them in a loving manner so love can be spread to others through them. You need to know what's important and that's our children. So, if your young and having babies, or old and having babies, know that this is the truth. If you're not responsible, you need to become it. You need to strategize and come up with some kind of way to make it. Don't risk doing something that is going to separate you from your son, or daughter, from you. They don't have a choice and have not done anything to deserve that kind of pain and confusion of being separated from their parents. Stay legit so you can be there for them. I know it gets hard and that never will cease , but just hang tight and do what's right. It'll pay off in the end. We got to take our roles seriously. When we do this, we've earned the right to be called "daddy!"

All of us, fathers, have a responsibility that all of us should uphold, no matter what. There is no reason to overlook our young ones. They rely on us

the beat without

RICHARD GEFFKEN

Such an honor to have yet another new writer in Richard Geffken share his thoughts with us Beat readers. This first time writer delivers his views from the Sumter Correctional Institution in Bushnell, Florida. We hope this is not a one shot deal from this talented writer. Sounds to us like he has plenty to share, and we here at The Beat are all ears. Tell us more!

Corporations Seek More Crime

The proliferation of statutes creating crimes for things never before considered criminal, longer sentences for everything, and having taxpayers pay for the "War on Crime" is a direct result of the successful ALEC (American Legislature Exchange Council) lobby in Washington, DC, the American Legislature Exchange Council influences state legislatures just as efficiently. Indeed, more than one third of state lawmakers, over 2,400 of them, are ALEC members!

Founded by corporations wishing to profit from increasing everything from prison guard pension funds to providing food for expanding prison populations, they lobby to create more reasons for imprisoning people whether guilty or not, longer sentences, eliminating acts of judicial mercy, and stop any outward flow of its source of revenue by rendering appeals and habeas corpus useless.

ALEC's success is seen by a prison population of two million Americans. Half are innocent of any wrong or serving for longer than their crime merits anywhere else in the world.

This is their cash register. By instilling a fear of criminals in the public mind, taxpayers pay for more police, more prisons, tougher laws, criminalizing nonsense, and the hiring of private armies these corporations control. Wackenhut, Pinkerton, and Dyncorp are just three corporations providing various government agencies with more prison guards, informers, and police, Aramark Corp. now serves the prisoners of most states their food rations, all for a profit, of course.

ALEC hires lawyers to create new model laws designed to swell the prison population. ALEC modeled the bills for mandatory minimum sentences, three strikes law, and the AEDPA, which removed habeas corpus as a Constitutional right by setting a 1 year time limit, few working everyday on a chain gang are able to meet. After the 1 year, none of the U-S Constitution applies to their convictions or sentences no matter how gross the violation.

Rationale for placing a time limit on rights all were born with is simply that it makes the business of maintaining unlawful imprisonments more efficient. No other purpose is observed or argued. Profit from human misery is the objective, not liberty. Products include handcuffs, steel doors, surveillance devices, electric chairs, and construction companies to build more prisons.

ALEC's creativity at creating new reasons for criminalizing things like spanking a child, intoxication, sleeping in a park, and speaking words now deemed criminal is complimented by lawmakers. Former Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson says, "Myself, I always love going to these meetings because I always found new ideas. Then I'd take them back to Wisconsin, disguise them a little bit, and declare that it's mine."

200 corporations found these model Penal Code think tanks. There, panels of prosecutors, judges, and attorneys frame "model" bills to enlarge the number imprisoned. It's all corporate sponsored legislation behind close doors. These creations are then sent to ALEC members in various legislations to enact into law.

This is not democracy. It is not moral.

Prohibiting any corporate profit from the judicial-prison system is one solution. Some may desire laws to imprison these people, leaving them to argue it's ex post facto in the same appellate system they themselves paid for. Only we no longer have a democracy. We don't make the laws, corporations do.

By instilling a fear of criminals in the public mind, taxpayers pay for more police, more prisons

Prohibiting any corporate profit from the judicial-prison system is one solution

Dear Beat

I understand you offer a free subscription to prisoners, and would be very grateful to begin receiving your publication.

It is difficult to write for a periodical never before seen, but I've had 42 articles published in almost three years. Even get fan mail!

The following is hoped general enough to be considered for publication. Once I view your editorial slant, preferred length, and preferred topics I may be able to satisfy specific needs.

ALEX MARTINEZ ***This is not the first time Alex Martinez has written The Beat, but is has been sometime since we last heard from him. We're sure part of the problem is us not getting back to him in a timely manner, and that we apologize. Shhh, we apologize to all of you who feel neglected by The Beat Within. With that said, lets hear a bit from Alex, his thoughts about his life, his cell, his future. Read on! Alex Martinez writes us from an adult correctional facility in Tracy, CA***

To The Beat

Before I begin this letter, allow me to extend my most sincere respects as well as my regards. I pray that when this letter reaches your hands, may it find you in the best of health and spirits, and may your creator have you under His tender loving wing out of all harm's way.

Good morning to all my fellas out there on them crazy streets and to the ones doing time. May God bless you today as you wake-up and as you see another lovely day. Amen.

My name is Alex Martinez and I am twenty-five years old. I am from Modesto, California. I have been locked-up for most of all my life, in and out of the system. At this moment, I am writing from the state prison in Tracy, California. I have been down for a year and four months. I have three years left to do before I even see the streets. I am a drop-out, gang-member, and I am proud of it.

Every morning at 5:30 am, I am up. I get down from my bunk and walk to the sink to clean-up and wash my face, brush my mouth, and shave my head. Once I am done with that, I shake my sheets and sweep off all the dust off of my bed so it's clean. Once I'm done dusting, I roll-up my bed where it looks like a chair. I fix my blankets and sheets really neat and I set them on the top of the bed.

Once I am done with that, I get back down before my cellie, Chino, gets up to do his thang. I walk-up to my shelf and get a soap, a rug, dip it in the toilet, and get it wet and soapy so it can clean up all the dust and mess out of the floor. I get down on my knees to do the job well. That's something that I never did before and I hate it. I clean-up the floor so good as well the toilet. Then I clean the walls, to keep the ants and roaches off of the wall.

I hate this life.

Once I am done with everything, I wake-up my cellie to let him know that I am done, so he can do his thang. We take turns doing this job. Once he is up, I go up to my bunk and lay there for a minute as my cellie Chino cleans up.

Once he's done with everything, I get back down and put on my oranges, whites, and shoes on and get ready for the doors to open to go to the chow hall. We have to be ready at all times. We never know who wants problems, so we gots to be on our toes all times.

We be having breakfast at 8:50 am. Once breakfast is done , feeding us, we head back to the our cell to be locked-down.

We only go to the yard on Tuesday. I wish it were today. We be out for three hours. We have yard Tuesday, Friday, and Sunday for three hours.

For the days that we don't have yard, we just kick-back and talk about the old days, or we write letters to our family or wives.

It's hard being in a cell, especially with two people in it. There are times when me and my cellie, Chino, bump heads for something stupid that was said.

Being in a cell is hard. There are some times that I feel like I am going to die in this cell. It's hell in this cell, and I am being real homies. There's a lot of stressing and hoping to get a letter from our family, hoping to know that they are doing all right.

It hurts to know that you'll be waking-up in the same place and go to through the same drama everyday. A cell can make a person go nuts.

To tell you the truth, I hate this life I've been living.

As I've been reading The Beat, I read about a lot of selfish youngsters who don't care about anything. All they care about is to be a thug and a pimp. Most of all, you youngsters don't know what a thug means. Why do you want to be like someone else who is a thug? Do you know that a thug is a big word and that it can kill you? Look at where being thuggish gets you? It gets you behind a cell where your family is not around. If you are a so-called "thug," why do you have your family put money on your books? I thought thugs had it all? To me, you are nothing but little kids who wanna be like the next man. The same goes for pimps. There isn't nothing in their life or world that can save you from dying in the streets, but yourself. Money, cars, or women can't change your life. The only thing or person that can is your self.

I read a lot of your stories saying that you want to change. In order to change, you have to let go of your old lifestyle, friends, and the bad things that brings you back in here. I'm not going to lie to you: this is my second time in prison and I am mad at myself for being back, but like I said, being in a cell sucks because there's too much worrying, hoping to God that our moms are doing fine and that they live many, many, years.

Life in a cell is hard because we mostly stay on locked-down the whole day.

At night, I stand at the door just to see what's going on.

Life in a cell sucks.

To all my so-called "homies," "homeboys," or "homegirls," I have one big word for y'all: Go to hell with your gang. I careless about any gang. I am my own man. Now, I do what I want to do. You guys were never there for me in the first place. All you ninjas cared about was a 40 oz. and a sack of bud. What about me though, fool? Like I said to all of your so-called "homies," screw your hood.

I am not going out like a chump, dying for a stupid ass color that I don't know what it's about. I am not dying for a street that has been there for many years. Hell no, I am not dying for a homeboy who's never there for me and I am not dying for any female that does not love me.

I'm going to tell you, to my so-called "hood".... It's over with. I am my own rider. I talk to who I please and I walk where I please. As a matter of fact, I am bunked-up with an ex-rival. It's about time somebody makes a change. Don't y'all think? Be yourselves.

With this, I want to let everybody know: be yourselves and your life will be better. Don't prove anything to anybody but yourself. May God bless you and take care of you. I hope to hear from you, always.

Life In A Cell

While sitting inside these walls alone,
My heart is sad and cold as stone.
Just thinking about the things I've done,
I'm missing you and it makes me sad
Wishing that I could be out there with my family again.
Being apart should be a sin.
At night, people yell from going insane
Keeping our love helps me maintain
You're my love; it's you that matters
Thinking about you at night and day
Our simple love is here to stay
Lost and alone without you near
You're the one that I would hold dear
The thought of seeing myself in this place, it ain't cool
Listen honey, I'm no fool
Remember to keep me on your mind
While I'm locked-up just doing time,
I'll be coming home soon, so remember me
Together at last, just you and me.

Life In A Cell Only For A While

I look outside my cell window
As night time fills the air
I gaze into a darkness sky
And see you standing there
Sometimes I have to turn away
Because it hurts me so
I want so much to be with you,
But they won't let me go
I know life has been hard on you
And sometimes don't seem fair
So I wrote this poem just for you
To show you how much I care
I love you and I need you
I miss you more each day
My feelings for you grow stronger
The longer I am away
I feel so sad and lonely,
But it's only for a while
Because I know that someday soon
I will be blessed by your sweet perfume.
Smile.

SINBAD *Thus far, every contributor in The BWO this week is a first time writer, and yet we have another new teacher offering his advice and tales from High Desert State Prison. We warmly welcome Sinbad, with the hope that this is not the last time we hear from this teacher from within. Sinbad waste no time in educating us readers. With that said, soak up game with his two poems he sends our way.*

Taken From The Pages Of My Mind!

Deception of honor can easily be mistakened in this chapter, the cool handshake, a pat on the back or heartfelt laughter. Those things so often used to gain a so called "friend," if at first you look beyond this, you'll see they are backstabbers in the end, but now we invite them in not knowing if they are cool or unkind, take heed to these parables, from the pages of my mind!

Drama and strife can cause a many heartaches, especially when you find out they aren't real, but fake! It comes in words like "Man, I'm straight down with you!" If you believe that then you've played yourself for a fool! So do "your" thing by yourself and on your time, just a little game kicked from the pages of my mind!

Drama and strife can cause a many heartaches, especially when you find out they aren't real, but fake!

KARL CHAN *This combination of poetry and prose from our friend and colleague, Karl Chan, is wisdom born of sad experience. But experience is truly only sad when we don't learn from it, and it's very clear that this young man has learned plenty. We hope that readers of The Beat can learn, without having to repeat the experiences that taught him this important lesson.*

Money Power Respect = Jail Death Forgotten

Money, money, money has corrupted our young minds.
We want to do anything to get the flow, get our roll,
keep our folks, and have the jewels,
and, of course, them girls, girls, girls.
The only way young kids know how
is to rob and steal, sell drugs, and their bodies,
sacrificing their lives to get the riches that will never be theirs —
for real, only a clouded illusion that was sent to seek
and destroy their pride and their soul.

We want power and we'll do anything to achieve it. Even the most well known of people in the world have gotten killed over power struggles. Hitler is a good example of what power hunger can do: get you killed, even if just by killing yourself. Which gang leader or mafia leader has not gotten killed or landed in jail for the power they seek by putting fear into people who later lost respect for these people, and decided it was time for a change. It's an endless and vicious cycle that is POWER.

The respect you seek will never be received through the streets and mistreating people. The more you do right the more they will remember you by and respect you for. The respect you want you will never get if you put fear in their heads. That's not respect, it's fear. How is someone being scares of you respecting you? It only makes them want to forget you more, and that can only lead to a further downfall for yourself and people around you.

The only way is to do right, or in the end, there'll be nothing left. It will all be forgotten, like you.

Use Your Brain

I'm a P-O-W getting at you from this bathroom
the state of California calls a "cell,"
and although my tribe is not the same as most of you,
I am black and involved in the exact same struggle,
so where I'm from, don't matter!
This message is for you if you're young and running the streets!
Use your brain!
The enemy wants you in one of these bathrooms.
In fact, as you read this, go to your current bathroom and just imagine
that being where you have to eat, sleep, read,
and yes, do what the room is designed for.
But look further, I have to workout here,
every personal possession I own in this world is here with me:
my television, radio, clothes, books, food, etc.
As you can see, materialistically I don't have much
and that's because when I was out there running the streets,
I didn't use my brain.
I too thought I was invincible.
I too thought I was slick with my little stash spots.
I too thought I was an exception to the rules,
but as you can see, my thoughts were a myth!
I too at times was a "thousandaire"
who thought that my money would last forever.
Look at me now…
I'm reduced to eating Ramen noodles in a bathroom.
Use your brain.
Don't be a victim like me
in the bathroom,
or like the many who have died
without reaching their full potential.
Use your brain if you are going to hustle.
Don't just hustle for a pair of tennis shoes,
hustle to be the manufacturer of tennis shoes.
At least that way you can wear a new pair everyday.
If you are going to act violently, think before you act,
nine times out of ten your contemplation will lead to a better result.
Use your brain, period, and believe in you!

It's an endless and vicious cycle that is POWER.

LIL' SPANKS

Lil' Spanks is back again, keeping his seemingly weekly spot in The Beat Without. In the following piece he confronts the struggle of his relationship, the reality of the challenges that face those who are separated by bars. As he chronicles the various cracks that have formed in the once tight bond, Lil' Spanks tells a story that many of you may know. Lil' Spanks writes us from Sacramento County Jail, and we hope to keep his pieces coming.

Mamas

You tell me what you want
You tell me what I wanna hear
And half-ass tell me what I wanna know . . .
Too busy on a front
From inside of here
I know everything that's going on
And everything's gooing wrong
For the truth —
Your eyes is where it shows . . .
Regardless of what I've done
And where I'm at
I'm not as dumb as those other cats
Sprung
With their heads all up their ass
You must think you have me fooled
But I sit here and laugh
I came, I saw, I conquered, and I ruled
I stayed true to my tasks
You have many faces but I know you
And your every mask . . .
With total concentration
Looking deep into your eyes
Pretty, yeah!
But also
Very very hollow
You call them "justifications"
I call them "lies" . . .
My life of incarceration
I witness so many different personalities
For the years to come
I see less and less love
It was said "there's a difference between holding a hand and chaining a soul"
I believe we went beyond just that
In fact
We lost control
'Cause there's no such thing as limits
To the distance
We go . . .
I said this before
"I've been many places
And I've seen many faces"
But nothing that glows and is as radiant such as yours . . .
My vocabulary may be limited
From line to line and verse to verse
I speak my mind
For better or worse
Sometimes I come hard and cold
Sometimes twisted and wicked
Sometimes it's just the only way I know . . .
Me and you have done so many wild and crazy things together
In just so little time
In my mind
Everything good and bad could last forever . . .
We stayed savage whenever we rocked an' rolled
This is how I feel
I'm keeping it real
So to cause tears is not my goal . . .
I miss you oh so very much
From your breath
To your head of on my chest
From me
Rubbing your feet
So much I just miss your loving tough . . .
I have to let you know that I love you for an eternity
Since when is it a crime
When two stars begin to shine?
The fire within burns eternally . . .
But I gotta let you go
There's so much I've sacrificed
And I could no longer provide

VALERIE SEELEY

Valerie Seeley writes to us from the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in New York. She is a first time writer to The Beat. Furthermore, we'd like to hear from more women because there are not many females that are consistent Beat Without contributors, and we know we all have plenty to say. We don't know too much about Valerie except what she writes in the following, but we hope to know more in the future. Thanks Valerie for considering The Beat three thousand plus miles away! We're thinking good thoughts!

Dear Beat

I would really like for readers to read my poem because I know how the system messes up not only me, but others as well. I got messed up in the system for not knowing that I wasn't suppose to talk to the police or detective without a lawyer.

The only thing that I knew was they were suppose to read me my rights before putting handcuffs on me and that I was entitled to make a phone call which I was denied.

I was 42 years old when I killed my abuser. It took me five and a half years to fight this case. I did two and a half years and went home in May 5, 2000 to finish fighting my case and lost the trial March 31, 2003. Now I'm back in jail with a lot of time.

**My vocabulary may be limited
From line to line and verse to verse**

My Life in Prison

Sometimes I feel like my life has no meaning
outside these prison walls that surround me,
the fear I feel everyday that I'm in prison.
This has become my life.
The pain I feel takes so much out of me everyday.
I wake up in a cold sweat saying,
"Oh God, please help me get through another night
without the nightmares,
the pain of my past haunting me every night,
without the cry in the middle of the night."
Saying, "Oh God, what have I done,"
"Lord please forgive me for taking a life,
forgive me for the pain I've caused on my family and his as well."
"Lord, I know that it's not your will for me to take my life,
because that would only 'cause more pain to my family,
friends and everyone that are still fighting for my freedom."
"Lord, please help me get through this fight one more time."
"Thank you, Lord."

Lord, please help me get through this fight one more time

the beat without

JE-NO ***Je-no comes back with two more hard hittin' flows. What consistently hits us in Je-no's writing is the mix of pathos and serious insight — it's rare to see such a mix of bravado and real knowledge. In the first flow, he comes with cry of despair for the circumstances of his — and our — world; in the second, he's comments on the fact that the more things change, the more they seem to remain the grimy same. Je-no, who once took part in Beat workshops in the max unit of Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall, now writes to us from Glen Mills YA alternative in Pennsylvania.***

Neva Should've Let Me In

(talkin')
Here I am
I know you been waitin' so long to take me
But not right now
Can't let it go down
This is me until death
Je-no, don't let the name fool ya'

(verse one)
My the lord have mercy on my enemies
even though y'all done tried to finish me
clearin' my conscious wit' this Hennessey
heart still empty
there ain't an ounce of sympathy in me
maybe a little bit
maybe just for the little kids
innocent infants who dyin'
look at the symptoms
they tryin' to make a difference
lyin' in my bed thinkin'
why isn't anybody listenin'
tryin' to make a decision
one, what's really my mission
dwellin' on my family problems
and should I fix 'em
I didn't
I admit it
I regret it
at least give me some credit
did you just see the news
and see that dude get beheaded
you can't give disrespect if you were never respected
how many children been neglected
toss into the mess when it gets heavy and hectic
when they're watchin' the television
and they envision a message that America is nothin' to mess wit'
how can we address it
when us people fall into depression
and we got nothin' but pills —
none of 'em anti-depressants
so we turn towards weapons
now it's our life that we threatenin'
we in the Book of Revelations
that means the dawn of Armageddon

(chorus x2)
It's ova
heart gettin' colder
try to tear me apart
but I told ya this is the art of a soldier
I'm a rida
strength of surviva
tried to pull me down when I rise up
even though I'm still locked up
here I come
y'all betta be ready
because you neva should've let me in

(verse two)
Y'all betta take heed fa real
this ain't me, this is Jesus' skill
can't believe that I'm breathin' still
got seeds to feed
so I need the scrill'
I'm hungry
starvin'
ribs showin' when I'm talkin'
when I'm done throw me in a coffin
Rest in peace
is what I'm wantin' to yell
only way I'm goin' back
is if I under the jail
I gotta eat because I'm hungry as hell
I see you laughin' 'cause you want me to fail
I understand my own patna
arranged to sleep me
us thugs is becomin' an endangered species
but nobody can't change or defeat me
I entered the game wit' a pocket full of change
and cheap cheese
I got what I wanted
now I'm hunted by the police
but at least I don't pretend
to want peace
I used to post on the front streets
hustlin' to eat
but it even fa me
to express myself to The Beat

how can we address it
when us people fall into depression

Same Song

Nobody can make me move
I'm standin' here 'til it's time to leave, dog
'cause I got somethin' to prove
a lot to gain, man
but nothing to lose
I neva stuck to the rules
call me a fool
no, matter of fact call me the prophet
no — it's not fo' profit
it's fa mo' street knowledge
how could the politicians make five prisons and one college
not even safe to go to school
'cause there's a chance to be tooken hostage
(Columbine)
not even safe to go to the booth
you can get popped quick (Jam Master Jay)
same way 'Pac did
it's the same way Big died
same way when pops get locked
he watched his kids cry
same way we stay in projects
where roaches in rats infest
claim you ain't scared to die
but you walk around wit' a vest (50 Cent)
but no disrespect
these words are not even direct
just to show you this is the game
it never evolves or change
young men get involved in gangs
in the front yard ya dogs is chained
old mattress in the back
hittin' front flips off the 'Lac
young males slangin' crack
only thing that evolved was gats
don't nobody like men no mo'
we'd rather cock it back
but we can't stop that
'cause the cops do it too
interrogation by the boys
it a show you who is true
but befo' I leave this earth I got somethin' to say
now thugs around the world let us all pray:
Now I lay me down to sleep
Lord guard me while I'm restin' 'cause my soul is weak
and if I die befo' I wake
let my real homies salute me at my wake
real recognize real, and it's the same fa fakes.
Amen.

FRANK RAMOS: THE KID

Although Mother's Day is past (or upcoming), this wonderful tribute to the strength of a loving mother makes this day her Mother's Day. Then, to follow it up with his love poem to his little girl makes us understand so well why Frank Ramos, "The Kid," writes: "I believe women make this world go 'round." From California State Prison, Lancaster, comes these tributes to two generations of women — one above, and one below.

Like Water To A Seed

Coming straight from the heart via my brain
this is my tribute to you on this second Sunday of May.
Along with this and a kiss I send your way,
my love, my respect, my admiration, and my praise.

They say it's a man's world but I gotta disagree
I believe women make this world go 'round, and I don't care what you think. Society can be blinding so I can't hate on you for being able to see reality. And in reality our mothers are everything:
they're our saviors, our angels, our providers, our queens!

Many fathers are cold, treason without reason, just leaving
family on their own.
Your mothers will struggle, push, bite, strive, and suffer,
anything to cover the cost of a home.
Mom you're the greatest, despite odds you made it
ain't never been easy still did what was needed
and to think you did it all alone,
that just goes to show,
there is nothing quite like my mother —
nobody has a kinder, sweeter or more gentle soul.

She's like water to a seed, like what a captain is to a team,
these aren't mere words,
adjectives, nouns, and verbs
that I speak.
This are true feelings merely being transformed by paper and ink.
She is strong when others are weak.
She's like a cool breeze in the hot desert heat.
She showed me I can't go wrong by doing right.
She's like the sun that chases darkness and brings the light.
Every night, every day, indeed on my mind constantly,
I love you mami, you mean the world to me!

Always been there for me mama, thru my few ups, and many downs.
Even when I was involved with the drama up to no good on the town,
never mattered, loves been unconditional, never abandoned me, you've always been around.
And when I've stumbled and fell you wouldn't turn your back on me,
you'd be there to pick me up off the ground.
And for that I give you a million thanks because one could never amount to the love and gratitude I have for you,
damn, you make me so proud.

In this life our own beds we make and in them we must lay.
This world's a crazy place filled with hate, wickedness and pain.
But knowing I have a mother like you makes everything okay.
Love, happiness, and health for you each night I pray.
I pray you like my gifts to you it's the least I can do to repay.
I love you, I miss you, I wish you a happy mother's day.

"It's Ruff...It's Tuff..."

What I'm about to do will not be easy,
indeed it will be very hard.
For it is difficult to find words to express the feelings,
that dwell deep inside my heart.
I've been blessed with a star...that shines so brightly
So first I must start by givin' thanks to the Almighty!
And since I'm here given credit to those that it's due...
I'll take this time to give your moms a million thanks,
for righteously raising and takin' care of you!

"Fine," she is my enemy...and she is also my friend.
And only one Being knows when it started,
and only He knows when it will end!...
Life is not easy, and it's meaning, nobody seems to comprehend...
That's because it varies, there's no single one,
there's millions upon millions of them...
Enough for everyone to choose his own,
and be happy in the shade of his personal tree...
To me mamas you have shown,
that the meaning of life is family.

You've been away in Indiana for years now, and I've missed you so much It's tough...not being there every day when you wake up!
It's rough...Not being there every night to tuck you in tight,
to look into your eyes, to tell you you're my pride,
to say a prayer with you, and then kiss you goodnight!

And now that you're back, it is I who am gone.
I have to pay for my mistakes; but life will go on.
And I promise you this, I'm doing everything I can to fix all my wrongs,
so I can be the father you deserve, and word is my bond.
There was a time when you asked me to do something that I just couldn't do. You wanted me to sign some papers, you wanted me to give up custody of you.
I knew at the time you didn't understand,
but I know now you do.
Because I know, Analiza you know,
Grandma didn't raise no fool!

It really means a lot to me...Your letters, your love, you're faith in me.
Thank you mija for believing in me...
never stopping the love, for being there unconditionally.
And until the next time ink and paper meet,
just remember you're in my heart, and prayers constantly.
Last but not least...You need to know, to me, you are everything in this world.
And even though you're 13, you need to know,
to me, you will always be just, daddy's lil' girl!

In this life our own beds we make and in them we must lay.

the beat without

ARTHUR LEE HENDERSON SR.

Arthur Lee Henderson Sr., aka Bakri Bilal Abdal Mu'min, incarcerated in Lancaster State Prison, calls himself Bakri. He has written about how, when he was a small child, it difficult it was for him to learn to read, and how his mother and step sisters tried to force him to read. Only later, when he had a wife and children of his own, did he pay other inmates to teach him to learn to read. Now he can read, write and express himself beautifully.

My Journey To Forgiveness

As a very small child, I knew that I was very different from everyone I came into contact with. No one else seemed as prone to bipolar behavior as myself. I was born in 1963, a time when any and all unacceptable behavior by a child was labeled, "acting out." As much as I loved all of the normal, acceptable activities: sports, music, movies, etc., my desire not to participate was just as strong. No one but I knew how I could go from unexplainable feeling of joy to unexpected feelings of extreme depression. The frustration often led to acts of violence, both verbal and physical.

Being a boy growing up in the 60s and 70s, I realized two very troubling qualities within myself. I was much more sensitive than boys were allowed to be. I was also unable to learn, based on the traditional methods of teaching. My mind could not or would not connect individual letters to form a word. I was in the fifth grade, or thereabouts, when both frustration and desperation led my beloved mother and one of my older sisters to attempt to force me to read. They had determined to force me to read every book on our family bookshelf, over one hundred books. No one besides me knew that in my mind, letters did not form words. T-e-n was just t-e-n, no matter how fast I was forced to say each letter. In my mind t-e-n never formed the word for ten. For what must have been thirty agonizing minutes, I was forced to pronounce these three letters as fast as I could, over and over again, while both my beloved mother and my sister stood glaring at me, convinced that I had to realize that I was pronouncing the word ten. Their threats included a whippin' and confinement to my bedroom the whole summer, with no entertainment, until I decided to read a whole book each day.

I'm the youngest of my beloved mother's nine children. Many of my brothers and sisters had several children, ranging from a few months younger than myself, to a few years. Every one of my nieces and nephew could read. I don't have to endure both within the family, a well as outside our home. Being a very sensitive boy and being totally unable to explain my inability t o comprehend how individual letters came together to form a word, I turned to acts of violence to stop all would-be teasers. Whippings, even ones for which I still wear the invisible scars, were more bearable than both the teasing and trying to get along with other kids, especially the good-behaving kids who I secretly yearned to play with.

The totally unexplainable mood swings often led me to acts of violence and self-hatred, because I knew I had hurt someone who did not deserve it, and someone I desperately wanted to be friends with. My learning disorder lead to a devastating life-altering decision, wherein I was caught copying answers off of a classmate's paper in the fourth grade. The teacher exposed my cheating to the whole class--one more huge embarrassment.

My decision was, I refused to do any school or homework. I went a step further by refusing to allow my nephew to do any schoolwork or homework, his punishment for being both a classmate and for being unable to suppress his own laughter. I didn't realize the teacher would never tell either of our mothers until the school year had ended, and then the letter arrived to inform our mothers that we'd be repeating the fourth grade, because we had both refused to participate in the class, beginning the first, our second week of the school year. Of course, we got a whippin' and my nephew was enrolled in a different school. Suddenly I was the oldest kid in my class, and the only one who couldn't do any of the work.

This was to be the case all through my school years. I began to realize that I needed two to three years to learn what other kids learn or were expected to learn in a year. Somehow I managed to get enough Ds to keep moving to the next grade. My school records will clearly verify all of this. My mood swings and learning disorder made me an outcast in life, period.

But I began to realize a few things on my own. I could do most anything I saw others do, by careful observation. I rarely understood why things were done a certain way. I just knew it was to be done that particular way. This new revelation was to bring me slightly better grades in math, because I knew how to work out math problems, though I didn't understand the logic behind why the division was to be done, or worked out by those methods. All forms of basic math and shop classes I could pick up by careful observation.

Still unable to understand nor explain my learning disorder, I was undone in high school. I scored high in math and was placed in advanced classes. But I was lost, because I knew no one in my classes, and I could not convince my teacher that I could not comprehend advanced math. Being able to fix things after seeing others do it, made it more difficult for others to view me as having a learning disorder. Unable to get through high school and unable to get to fill out any kinds of applications, I used drugs as an escape and a way to fit into a crowd.

A long history of arrests followed. 99% of my convictions and arrests were for accessory, i.e., being with others when they committed a crime.

I broke through my leaning block in 1987, when the fear of my son's mother, who was a college student, finding out I was not educated, at least formally led to me using every waking hour in the Los Angeles County Jail to pay other inmates to teach me whatever they could, while I did cell studying for my GED.

I wanted to give up every night. It seemed impossible, but having to tell my two babies—my eighteen-month-old daughter and one-month-old son, one day that daddy was illiterate, was not an option. No one knew as well as I how important school and an education is, if one is to lead a civilized life. The first fifteen years of constant misdiagnosis into this life without the possibility of parole, plus an eleven-year sentence for accessory to several serious crimes, i.e., being present before and after, not during the actual crimes, I realized two things. Medications don't help me; nor do I need any.

I only respond to doctors who are able to help me understand why I have severe mood changes and to identify the symptoms. I now know that when I become unusually up beat and silly for no apparent reason, I'm headed for a serious bout of depression. I'm no doctor; I only know this from forty years' experience. I've learned from my GED test scores and other college test scores that I can learn anything, I just have to study much more than others and ask a lot of very basic questions. Though I do not believe it is fair that a country as great as American has chosen to turn those of us slow learners and mentally ill human beings into human commodities for the prison industry, I've learned to forgive those who must wrack up convictions and over-worked mental health doctors who see far too many games to be able to properly diagnosis and/or treat those of us who must learn to heal ourselves or end our own lives. I'm a survivor because I've never had a family to know what it's like to be abandoned. I'm now a man who loves to self-educate and to help educate others. There is no greater guidance than God, for most human beings lack the ability to forgive and to punish fairly.

STEPCHILD ***This next piece came our way from the man known as Stepchild. He delivers a painful story about his life with his family, fro mthe early days to where he sits today in the California Department of Corrections. We do not know too much about Stepchild, but we are honored to give him the space to tell his story. We hope it helps!***

I Had No Role In Whether I Was Loved Or Aborted

I did not play a role in my mother meeting my father, nor did I have a vote in whether I loved or was aborted—such is the fate of all us stepchildren.

My mother had nine children—eight have the same mother and father. I'm the stepchild in both households and was never accepted by either household. My mother's death ended all blood ties I had.

I no longer believe one of my sisters accidentally dropped me out a window on top of a gas meter, head first at age one year old. My life has led me to believe I did not slip from her hands, nor do I know why she felt the need to sit me on the open window ledge and tickle me.

I remember the free fall from the kitchen window and a chandelier falling from the ceiling with glass logging in my head at age eight or so. And I remember the hospital and the doctor showing me the shards of glass removed from my head.

Another sister was very much against my very existence, since I'm a stepchild and a constant reminder of our father's unfaithfulness to her mother. She literally hated me until her incarceration and my ex-gang ties paved the way for her entrance into prison life. I suddenly had real value as a human being to a lady who once tried to kill me, after plotting to bash my head in, after our father gave me keys to all his vehicles, while she had been the only other driver of them besides him.

She had a steel pipe and the side van door was unlocked. I entered the van to move it to park the other van behind it, as our father wanted his cars parked in a certain arrangement and became very angry if we did not park each car in order, regardless of the owner, in the way he designated.

I heard the van door open and looked in the rearview mirror in time to raise my arm to absorb my sister's blow that would have ended my life. I would have either died from the blow or rolled out into a bus intersection, to be blindsided in a crash we'd seen countless times, causing many deaths, because the train's overpath blocked oncoming cars' views, and there was no stop light to yield oncoming traffic onto a busy boulevard.

My family does not associate with me. My sister is the only family member I still hear from. I'm not allowed to have the phone number to call my father's house and my own mother passed away in February of 1994.

If I were unable to write to her and send notes to ex-homegirls in the pen, my sister would have no need of me.

I was taught every criminal behavior I know by my siblings, and I always knew they found real jobs for each other and taught me to sell drugs and to run with the gangs. I simply knew nothing else, as I was released from CYA, and I am the youngest of my mother's nine children, yet they plotted to force me out into the streets.

They could have taught me to be a doctor, a lawyer, anything but a drug dealer, which was a part of their desire to rid their families of me. I was too young to know what was in the bags when I was told to deliver them on my unicycle, and when I became aware of what I'd been doing, I was in too deep.

Years had passed and I'd spent my grade school years with only adults as their drug runner, so I could not relate to the innocence of other preteens. I'd seen too much violence. I knew how to get the money to buy bikes and more candy that we could eat; yet I could never tell how I got the money.

I'm the bastard child nobody ever liked saying was their little brother. I asked my father to please allow me to move to Little Rock, Arkansas, to accept his older brother's offer to live in their deceased mother's house and care for her property. He had a job lined up for me, also. I explained to my father that out of my childhood friends, we were all being murdered before our twenty-fourth birthdays, and I was twenty-three years old. He said, "No, those white folks down there will kill you because you talk back to police."

When my stepbrothers and sisters conspired to force me into the streets, I had no job nor was I back into drugs. They convinced our mother to put everyone out of her house by June first of 1983. Then a family member to buy drugs to sell, to raise the money to get myself an apartment, gave I. Then I was told I had to be first to pack up and move out. I was the only one with no job. I had to move in May 1983. More importantly, everyone else never moved out until my mother died, in 1993, while I was in prison with life without, plus eleven years, for crimes I did not commit.

Three months later I was seated in court listening to a DA explain to a judge why I should face the death penalty for having gotten someone to leave their door unlocked for other people to enter once I'd left, so they could kill all the occupants.

So, I said, "Wow! I'm still going to die before my twenty-fourth birthday!" I did not do anything to get the person to not lock the door, once I had left to go home. We were all in the drug game, and every drug dealer knows robbers stake out their houses, follow them home, etc.

My father's wife forced my father to try to get my mother to help hire a lawyer for my sister, when she was facing seven years and I was facing death, and no one had even a dollar for me. They sold all my new furniture, my new truck, and everything I had hoped to sell to hire a lawyer to confront the false testimony against me, to prevent my release. Fortunately, I'm innocent, so they had no clue about the crimes, and they were not used as witnesses after my preliminary hearing, and the death penalty was dropped for life without, plus eleven years.

So, I'm a survivor. My siblings have plotted my death twice that I'm aware of, and I'm the only one of my friendship circle to see my twenty-fourth birthday, and, as of June 12, 2004, my forty-first birthday. I guess I understand why my family does not want me to get out, not that I'd go near them or cause anyone harm. Not many good Christians want to be known for trying to end the life of their bastard brother.

I will survive and walk free one day. God has protected me long before I was able to fend for myself or understand that my family had marked me for death. So, here is my essay about learning to forgive people for their ignorance. I had no part in my mother and father meeting, or the two family feuds that resulted from my birth. That is why I seek to help people, because I know how hard life can be when one's existence is a family shame. How people never ever realized I was a human being.

I enjoy reading history, language, most fiction and learning more about creative writing. I'm an education prison nerd. I do not watch my TV or listen to music until after 9:00 pm. I suffered two serious head injuries as a small child and I've learned to self-educate, because I've learned that I have to learn the basics of each subject in order to really get a handle on it. I'd love to receive books to continue my educational growth. They do have a library here. I do not really like to engross myself in entertainment for days and days. I view a good novel as a treat to myself once a month, just like a soda and some candy. I'm a health-conscious man and view all else as only a treat, after some good accomplishments.

here is my essay about learning to forgive people for their ignorance

the beat without

CECIL L. WEST

The following pieces of poetry come to us from Cecil L. West, who as far as we know is a first time Beat Without writer from Jefferson Correctional Institution in Monticello, Florida. We're sure Cecil's tales of family and family's scorn, love and love lost, will resonate with many of you who have gone through similar situations and can identify with the joy and pain that Cecil feels. We thank Cecil for his submissions, and we look forward to hearing from him again soon.

My Love Gone Friends

My long gone friends came to a bitter end
I pray to the creator they didn't die in their sins
They have to be in a better place than here on earth
Life was pre-destined before out birth!

My long gone friends will continue to live even beyond the grave
'Cause I know within my heart they're resting in a very special place!
All the sorrow, hurt, and pain is gone
'Cause the Father has called them home!

My long gone friends' faces constantly flash through my mind
I know it will be this way till the end of time:
Beverly Lewis, Michele Louzon, Ginger MacNally, Linda Hanes, Eliza Northerd, Sally Wilson, and so many others
I grew to love them like sisters and brothers!
Seems they was the only family I ever knew
These words I print are so very true!

My long gone friends will live through my novels and poems
They will also live in beautiful songs!
I feel their presence as I write…
I think of my long gone friends each day and night!

This poem is for my long gone friends
This isn't the end, it's only the beginning!
People will see you through my eyes as you really were — loving, caring, and sharing
Even though at times you was so very daring!
My long gone friends

This Poem Is For You

This poem is for you
For all the times that you've stood beside me
And the love in your heart has opened my eyes to the point that I can see!
All the times I have done you wrong
Yet you still accepted me in our home!

This poem is for you
To let you know that I love you more than anything in this world
And to me you are an extremely beautiful girl!
I know I'll always feel this way
For years I've felt like this night and day!

This poem is for all the memories that we share
I know within my heart that you will always care!
Even though we're separated and far apart
I want you to know that you will always hold a very special place in my heart!

This poem is for you and all my love
Which is beautiful as the stars shining bright up above!
No woman or man can ever change the way we feel
'Cause the love we share is so very real!
I know we both will feel this way till the end of time
And I know in my heart you will always be mine!

My long gone friends will live through my novels and poems They will also live in beautiful songs!

Your Eyes

Your eyes are as beautiful as the stars shining bright at night
When looking at you the desire that stirs within me is a constant fight!
As I look deep into your sparkling eyes into your soul
What I see there is far more precious than gold!

Your eyes reflect what's running through my heart and mind
It was meant to be this way from the beginning of time!
As you look into my eyes with a beautiful smile on your face
Shows me the world was created to be a very special place!

Your eyes I see in my dreams
And I realize what true beauty means!
All the things your beautiful eyes make you feel
Shows me that what we share has got to be real!
I know your beautiful eyes will haunt me for the rest of my life
That's why I would do anything to have you for my beautiful wife!
Your eyes

War

War has caused many to suffer the lost of loved ones
Yet the suffering is far from done.
It's all caused by hate, greed, and power
While people continue to die by the hour!

War leaves families torn apart
With sorrow, hurt, and pain in their hearts.
Thousands have died as of this date
While our government continue to control women and men's fate!

War has caused many women and kids to die
We all must sit down and ask ourselves why?
The Bible say thy shall not kill
Yet men do it with a will!
We supposed to trust our president who is only a man
Who brings total destruction upon this world again and again!

War is a very sad story
Men killing men seeking glory.
Our government and president feels that war is something that must be done
Knowing that some kid mother or father won't be coming back home!
War

CECIL L. WEST (CONT.)

My Family

My family has disowned me since the day I was born
As my parents looked upon me with nothing but scorn!
As the years has passed me by
I continue to ask myself the reason's why!

My family don't realize the pain their causing me
It's as if they don't care, I can plainly see!
Over the years I've grown stronger
It's as if I have no family any longer!

My family look at me as the black sheep
Not realizing the turmoil of emotions running so very deep!
It meant nothing to me that I left home at a very young age
In this cruel world we live in, it's only a chapter to another page!

My family consists of grandmother, two sisters and no brothers
Of which I never knew my father or mother!
Yes, I have a nephew and two nieces
And the way they neglect me and rips my heart to pieces!
My family

A broken heart makes you feel that you can never love again

A Broken Heart

A broken heart is so very painful at times
As my wife told me she was leaving, that's what happen to mine!
As I walked away with tears running down my cheeks
It's been this way for many of weeks!

A broken heart runs so very deep
Many of days and nights I couldn't sleep or eat!
Sometimes I find myself with tears running down my face
At those times this world was a very miserable place!

A broken heart comes from being deeply in love
And the pain in your heart makes you cry out to God up above!
Asking Him to take the pain away
As you pray to Him night and day!
Sometimes you wonder if He hears your prayers
At those times you feel as if life is so very unfair!

A broken heart makes you feel that you can never love again
It will either break you, or make you a better woman or man!
As time passes by, the pain won't be so bad
But when thinking of that special loved one, it will make you so very sad!
A broken heart

Memories

Memories of all the beautiful times we've shared
I knew within my heart you truly cared,
All the times we've looked out over the ocean while holding hands
At those times I knew I was a very lucky man.

Memories of all the times we've walked through the park
Under a blanket of stars after dark.
As I held you in my arms in a tender embrace
At those times I knew the world was a very special place!

Memories of all those times we've kissed and made love
Which was as beautiful as the stars shinning bright up above.
All the times we've shared what was in our hearts
I knew it would be this way from the very start!

My beautiful wife, even though we're separated and far apart
I want you to know that you hold a very special place in my heart.
I know it will be this way till the end of time
And deep within my heart you will always be mine!

All The Times
All the times I looked upon your beautiful face
Showed me the world is a very special place!
As I look into your beautiful brown eyes that sparkles when looking at me
I'll always love you I can plainly see!

All the times we've shared candlelight dinner
I knew within my heart that I'd found a winner!
When looking into your beautiful eyes all the joy and happiness I felt
That thought of not having you for my wife made my heart melt!

All the times we've laughed and cried together
The love we shared couldn't have been better!
The times I've shared your laughter and wiped your tears away with my hand
At those times I knew I was a very lucky man!

All the times I've cherished everything about you
Shows me the love we share is so very true!
Even the things I thought was small — a caress, touch, a kiss…
These are the things I truly miss!
All the times

Love, Sorrow, And Pain

Love, sorrow, and pain can be bittersweet
Caused by emotions running so very deep.
It's been this way since the day I was born
As my parents looked upon me with nothing but scorn!

Love, sorrow, and pain has been apart of my life for as long as I can remember
I think of my mother and father from January thru December.
24hours a day, 7days a week
Only 'cause the maternal love in my heart runs so very deep!

Love, sorrow, and pain is what one feels when losing someone they truly love
One way to sooth the pain is to pray to the almighty God above.
He will take the pain away and sooth your soul
That's more precious than any amount of gold!

Love, sorrow, and pain can either destroy you or strengthen you
As you search your heart and soul, you will find my words to be so very true

the beat without

THE POETIC PRISONER

Those of us who love The Poetic Prisoner — not just for his sublime poems but for his sublime heart — are reluctant to answer the question posed in his first piece, "What Would You Do?" because we feel we are part of those who analyze and dissect his every move as if he were a frog splayed on a science table. But we will say this: you may not be a Superman who can save everybody, but you are a real man who can save somebody, even one body. We have seen your words deeply touch other lost youngsters in ways whose profound impact cannot be calculated. We only wish you could see it too, so maybe one of those 'ones' you'll "save" is yourself.

This Is What I Do!

I live life like each day was my last
Like I have to make up for my past.
When I'm supposed to go slow, I go fast.
And I don't know why, so don't ask.
I've seen a lot of ugly things,
So I excessively gravitate to what's pretty.
And sometimes I just roam the streets
Because I enjoy loving my city.
I spend time with my lady,
And although she has the power to drive me crazy,
I still want to be with her daily.
Especially if she's going to be the one to have my babies.
I help my mother with my baby brother
As much as I can.
I try to catch up with the world
Even though some would say that's not the right plan.
I've contemplated suicide,
But now I know that wouldn't be best for you and I.
For if I live my life like it's do or die
Then I wouldn't be fit to do what's right.
I couldn't go do those wonderful workshops
And witness a whole generation of talent.
I'd be engulfed in madness,
So my life would be imbalanced.
I have as much fun as I can on the weekends,
They help me from going off on the deep end.
I'm not the type to go out and seek friends
Because I can't be around folks that ain't tryin' to be men.
Worrying about me is simply not the remedy,
For I don't even know exactly what jail did to me.
Just don't make it so easy to get rid of me,
For my possibilities could outlive infinity.
But right now I've learned to be numb,
To hide my faults and just have fun.
It's hard living up to the expectations of intelligence,
So I get high as a reason to act dumb.
I'm not trying to prove I have nothing to lose,
I'll leave that to all of you.
Meanwhile I'll live my own life,
Because this is what I do.

**It's hard living up to the expectations of intelligence,
So I get high as a reason to act dumb.**

What Would You Do?

A wise man once said, "Ignorant men don't know what good they hold until they've flung it away." These words would ring like ambulance sirens horrendously pounding on the drums in my ears until my face cringed with utter irritation. I'd sit in my cell and beg a God I never believed in to take these vicious thoughts out of my mind and replace them with institutionalized ideas such as: "I hope we're having peanut butter for lunch.", "I can't wait until I can go to canteen.", or "I only have three more years to do before I get out. I'm halfway done."

Thinking about flinging my own freedom out of my hands was embarrassing. Knowing my mother didn't birth me and sacrifice her whole life to see her first-born child behind rusted barbed wire fences made me feel guilty. I was an ignorant man that didn't know how good freedom could be until I flung it away.

With that said, you could probably only imagine the relief I felt when they let me out of those gates. My jaw stayed dropped in utter amazement as I walked away from the monster that held me captive for six years. My mother cried deep tears. And not the same tears she cried when I told her I just caught another year. Or the same as me calling and telling her she can't come to see me this weekend because we were on lock-down for something I wasn't involved in.

The tears I speak of were accompanied by the brightest smile I'd ever seen on my mother. There were points in time when I thought my mother was incapable of smiling. But not today — today she was grinning from ear to ear as each of her eyes were competing going tear for tear. Oh, what a joyous sight to see!

This sight quickly and without warning started to become a faded memory because with every privilege comes a responsibility. And with every responsibility comes someone who's responsible enough to conquer it. How in the hell would I be equipped to tackle any responsibility, let alone the responsibility of living free, after doing six long years in gladiator school? I learned to shut up and wait to be given orders before I made the slightest move. I was a grown man who needed permission from another grown man just to piss.

This was embarrassing beyond comprehension, so as time passed my pride, self-worth, self-respect, and identity left right beside it — hand in hand. They broke me down in every sense of the word, but when it was time to rebuild me, they ignorantly rebuilt me to cope with life in YA, which is a far cry from being out here in this fast-paced world.

They told me when to spend the money I got in the mail. As a matter of fact, they told me when I could get my mail. They made every decision for me, all I had to do was acquiesce and keep my mouth shut. Which wasn't a problem for me at the time because I never had to make my own decisions anyway. So I wasn't trippin' until the fateful day I got released.

What would you do if you were tasting freedom for the first time in six years? What would you do if you were taken from the people you loved and shoved back into their arms after only seeing them every other week? What would you do if you became sleep deprived because you were scared to close your eyes and open them up knowing you could be back in that concrete box at any given moment? What would you do if everybody was watching your every move because they know you're a seventeen year old trapped in a twenty-three year old's body and they are filled with suspense, wondering what mistakes you're making so they can analyze them and dissect you as if you were a dead, depressed frog?

Well, this is what I do. I accept it, respect it, and

continued on next page

THE POETIC PRISONER (CONT.)

continued from previous page

deal with it. A wise woman taught me that in order to transfer your pain onto someone else, you have to be able to act as if nothing bothers you. Then, the other person will wonder why you're not communicating your true feelings and get frustrated. This is the way you gain the upper hand out here.

So as I complain every week on paper because I don't know what else to do, remember that it's all for good reason. Hey, at least I'm not lashing out on people and beating them into bloody blobs of hypocritical swollenness. No way for a parolee to talk, but like a kid in one of my workshops said, "If you don't like it, you can kiss my ass." Besides these are just thoughts and ideas that never hurt anybody unless they got put into action.

Maybe I just need some attention, or maybe I really am sick of this shhh. But if you spent twenty-two hundred scorching days in boring ass Stockton next to the unbearable stench of a forgotten landfill while being blinded by shiny barbed wire as a reminder that you are going to call this place home for quite a while, what would you do?

If every time you went into a workshop you saw a younger you and you wanted so bad to be Superman and save everybody's day, what would you do? If every time you saw a blind person or someone with a patch on their eye, you were reminded of that day when you transformed into the devil, had feelings for no one, and shot an innocent man eleven times with a pellet gun. Each shot a step closer to one of the worst juvenile prisons in the country. With the last one being the one that took this man's eye — his vehicle for taking in beautiful images and when he was down and out these images made him feel better. He no longer has that luxury and it's all because of you. What would you do? Tell me, what would you do?

All I wish to hear now is just the... truth.

JOSEPH BARTELL

Joseph Bartell was once incarcerated in Napa County Juvenile Hall. He is now unfortunately incarcerated in CYA. He hasn't written in a while, but this week he drops a couple of pieces. We hope everyone takes a look at these pieces. He has a lot to say.

Sorrow

The light that once was so bright,
Fades at each passing day that
Should have brought the three words I've longed
to hear from you
Who spawned me into hatred
The light grows dim, dim, so dim
My heart is a solid chunk of useless marble
My body is always cold
I shiver deep within
Deep at the core of all I am
You, who spawned me
Caused me only sorrow, to keep me
Company
You, who spawned me
Made sorrow my only friend
All I wish to hear now is just the... truth.

Inner Child

My souls light flickered out
As if it was a tattered flag
Blowing in the fall winds
Once again, the urge is burning within
The mad desire to hurt the child who dwells deep within
I once handled the urge with a little help
from my little lady friend
Her name is Mary Jane,
her warm breath made my head spin
Now, I just let the hurt bother the wounded one within
If the little guy wasn't within, would I still choose to live
my life full of sin?
The man that I think I am battles all that is good
And turns it into deep-routed in on the hurt one within.

To The Beat:

Hey all of you, it's me Joseph Bartell again. You all have not had writing from me in some time. I am in CYA doing 9 1/2 years. I can get out in 2006 if I do a good program.

Before I came to the "Y," I did not care about anything. Now that I have been in for a year and had some time to think about my life, I have a lot to care about.

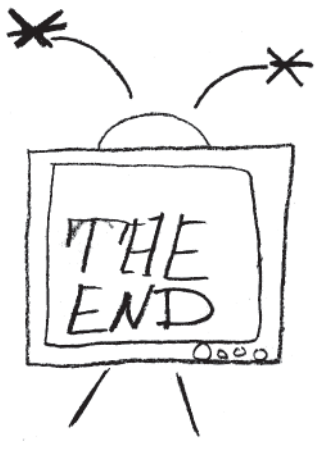
So, to all of you who may come to the "Y," you can change before you have to come to the "Y."

Once again, the urge is burning within The mad desire to hurt the child who dwells deep within

MICHAEL OROZCO

For six plus years, artist, Michael Orozco has been contributing predominantly and faithfully his art and occasional commentray to The Beat Within. His art he has created within The Beat world has created a loyal following from fellow Beat readers and admirers. So, what do you think of his cover art, "Sorceress?" The original is a beautiful, done with pen and felt tip markers, as is the drawing below, titled, "Beat Thoughts." On the next page we have yet another Michael Orozco gem, this one titled, "Thoughts." It is always an honor to share his powerful and committed work. Over the years, Michael's work has been featured in numerous Beat covers, this week it is rare to give him not only the cover, but give him the last two pages in The BWO section. We are forever grateful for Michael and his art, which he so kindly shares with us all. Michael Orozco created these three pieces in the Metropolitan Correctional Center in San Diego, CA.

THE BEAT WITHIN

To all the fathers out there, we need to love our children, be there with them. We need to base our decisions on making sure that they benefit from them and not only us. They need to become first and us last. We need to set the example for them and what better way to do that than with love?

check out the rest of Dreamer's ßWO piece on page 72